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BARAK'S PEACE PLAN
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August 16, 1999

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George W. Bush's Compassion for Corporations

By JOHN B. JUDIS

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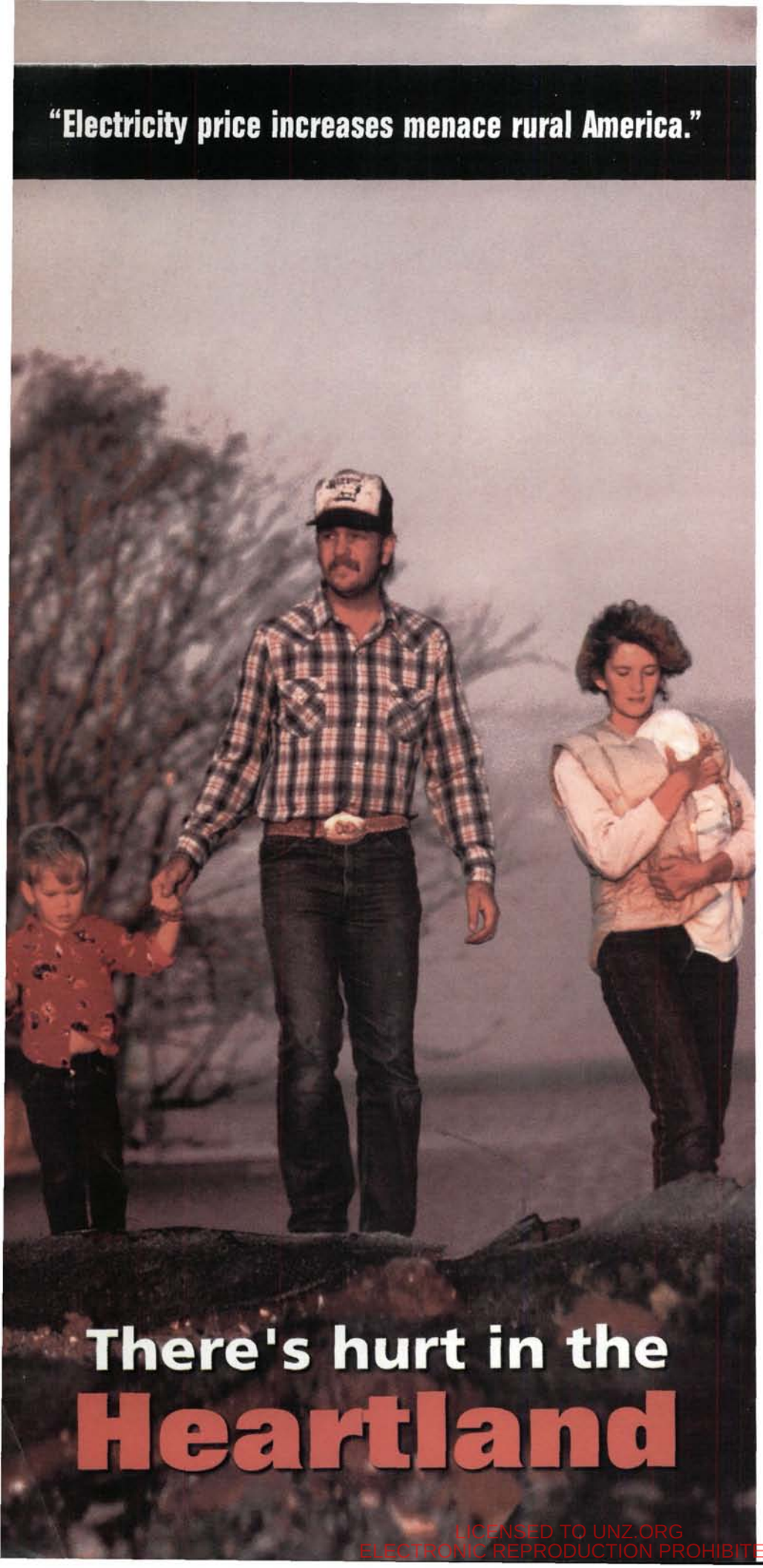

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Diplomatic correspondence

TO THE EDITORS:

I admit to grudging admiration for how Ryan Lizza can pound a square peg into a round hole ("Demolition Man," July 5).

I particularly admire his claim that my March 1999 article in *The Washington Post* ("Part-Time Envoys Can't Cure Full-Time Conflicts") blocked Richard Holbrooke's nomination from June 1998 to March 1999. I must be the most powerful man in Washington if an article I had yet to write blocked a cabinet appointment for nine months.

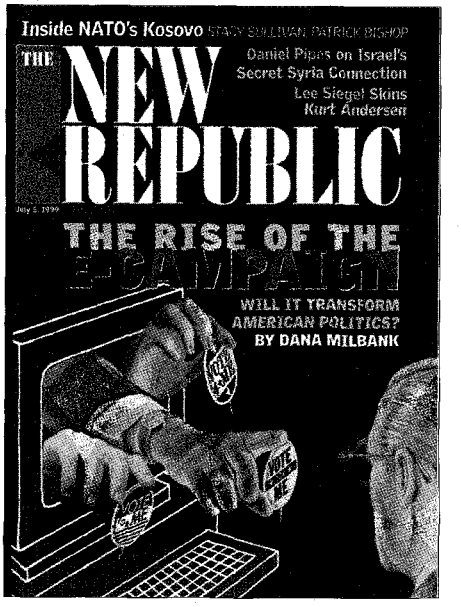
Faced with my denial of malicious lies about my short stint in the foreign service 26 years ago, Lizza relies on an anonymous "some say" to hammer in a claim that I am "getting back at the State Department establishment that derailed [my] foreign service career." While three years is no "career," the fact is, as I told Lizza, that when I resigned in 1973 I was one of the two or three youngest foreign service officers of my rank.

Subsequently, during eight years with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I staffed hundreds of nominations. Only two nominees were not confirmed. This hardly makes me "Demolition Man."

One failed nominee was Richard Viets. Viets has only himself to blame for the end of his career. Contrary to the portrait Lizza paints, the allegations against Viets were not my "charges"; they were made by his own staff and by State Department inspectors. The State Department, like the military, conducts routine inspections of its embassies as a management tool to run its far-flung network of overseas posts. The inspectors write reports about problems they find.

We asked Viets about these issues to give him a chance to respond to charges made against him by fellow foreign service officers. To allow him a chance to give his side of the story was simply a matter of basic fairness. He explained the allegations, and that was the end of that.

The reason Viets's nomination failed is that a courageous State Department employee with detailed knowledge of Viets's financial affairs and other activities in Jordan flew to Washington to testify under oath about a broad range of misconduct, financial and otherwise. The witness described a pattern of abuse. In


Inside NATO's Kosovo
THE NEW REPUBLIC
Daniel Pipes on Israel's Secret Syria Connection
Lee Siegel Skins Kurt Andersen
THE RISE OF THE E-CAMPAIGN
WILL IT TRANSFORM AMERICAN POLITICS?
BY DANA MILBANK

one instance, it was alleged, Viets submitted a voucher for food served at an embassy reception, but the guests reported that no food was served. In another instance, after a group of seven American businessmen on a trade mission came to Viets's house and stayed an hour for what they insisted was only two predinner drinks, he submitted a voucher for five full bottles of liquor.

While Senators Cranston, Dodd, Pressler, and McConnell joined Helms in voting against the nomination, it was voted out of committee. But the Senators who voted for him did so without enthusiasm. Viets's career ended when Senate Majority Leader Byrd refused to bring the nomination to the floor. Byrd made the correct decision.

With regard to Holbrooke, there has been no change of heart on my part. I have never objected to Holbrooke's confirmation and appointment to be U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. My article objected to his previous appointment as a part-time, unpaid special envoy while he worked as an international investment banker and engaged in other for-profit endeavors. Unlike the previous example, the problems in the Holbrooke case are not personal misconduct but the unavoidable conflicts of interest when a person is both an international businessman and a senior American diplomat and is unable to give full-time attention to his public service responsibilities. As I pointed out in the article, the question before the committee should be why these businessmen/diplomats—and there are now many of them—were appointed in the first place. If Lizza had read my article carefully, he would know that putting Holbrooke on the payroll as a full-time employee is pre-

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cisely what I believe should have happened years ago.

PHILIP CHRISTENSON
Washington, D.C.

RYAN LIZZA REPLIES:
I didn't claim that Christenson singlehandedly "blocked Richard Holbrooke's nomination from June 1998 to March 1999." Christenson had plenty of help from an anonymous letter-writer whose accusations prompted the first investigation of Holbrooke. As I reported, Christenson's *Washington Post* op-ed and the new State Department probe it spawned came after the initial investigation, just at the moment that Holbrooke's nomination was getting back on track. With regard to Viets, the final report of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which voted 12–5 to confirm him, noted that he was "exceptionally well qualified" for the job and reported that two State Department audits found no evidence "of an intentional disregard of either law or regulations."

Al Gore, farmhand

TO THE EDITORS:
I was amazed to read in Dana Milbank's "Up to Speed" (July 12) that Vice President Al Gore's off-the-cuff remarks on his time spent in the 4-H club "creat[ed] a momentary worry that we would hear another yarn about his youth as a farmer on the fertile plains of Massachusetts Avenue."

Milbank's passage continues a spin we have heard since the middle of March—that Gore was lying when he told an interviewer (*The Des Moines Register*'s David Yepsen) about his youthful experiences on his family's Tennessee farm. The Republican National Committee has produced an endless stream of silly faxes, all suggesting that Gore's comments were false. Dim pundits have eagerly repeated the spin, damaging Gore's reputation in the process.

The problem is that this spin is false and flies in the face of Gore's well-established life story. Over the course of the past twelve years, the Washington press corps has written a series of profiles about Gore that have described these youthful experiences. Bob Zelnick, in his recent bio for the conservative publisher Regnery, made these farm chores the central metaphor of Gore's entire life.

BOB SOMERBY
Baltimore, Maryland

The death of satire

TO THE EDITORS:
In Lee Siegel's review of Kurt Andersen's *Turn of the Century*, Siegel's lament for true satire—the humane upbraiding of

continued on page 45

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

THE LEXUS AND THE OLIVE TREE

UNDERSTANDING GLOBALIZATION

Thomas L. Friedman

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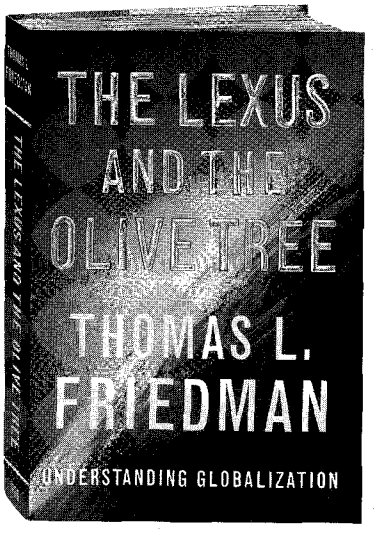

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

Intercepted

IN A RECENT Pentagon war game scenario, an RAH-66 Comanche assault helicopter accidentally shot down a B-1 bomber. An Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft arrived to rescue the downed pilots while F-22 fighters flew high air cover, a Seawolf attack submarine kept enemy warships at a distance, and MX strategic missile batteries were placed on alert. The scenario was heady, exciting stuff, considering that all the weapons had, at some point, been canceled.

Okay, I'm making up the part about the war game, but the "canceled" weapons part is verity. Every weapons program mentioned above was supposedly eliminated by Congress, the White House, or the Department of Defense itself—yet, many tens of billions of dollars later, every one still exists. Something to keep in mind when mulling the recent spate of stories that suggest the F-22 Raptor interceptor plane is suddenly a goner.

The new fighter soared into the news in July when the House voted against appropriating funds for its production. Amazed that a Republican House would move against a major Pentagon initiative, especially hard upon the success of U.S. air power in the Kosovo campaign, headline writers treated the F-22 as if it were going down in flames. But it's just an initial House action—funding may reappear in conference committee, a two-step by which numerous troubled weapons have seemed to disappear and still won the green light. (Voting against a program at the appropriations stage, then in favor of a conference committee report that includes the program, is a time-honored means of coming down firmly on both sides.) What's more, as former Pentagon official Lawrence Korb pointed out in *The New York Times*, there is still $1.2 billion in the budget for continued F-22 development. Thus, the F-22 may end up not canceled but "stretched"—delayed and produced in smaller numbers.

California Representative Jerry Lewis, chairman of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, prompted the anti-F-22 vote. Lewis is being hailed by pundits as a Republican willing to face up to the military-industrial establishment, but his own stake in the matter has escaped attention. The F-22 would be manufactured mainly in Georgia, two time zones away from Lewis's district. If the project is actually zeroed out, some savings would almost certainly be redirected to the Joint Strike Fighter, the Pentagon's next-in-line aircraft program. Home port for the Joint Strike Fighter is an Air Force facility in Palmdale, California, adjacent to Lewis's district. So, if the F-22 gives way to the Joint Strike Fighter, Lewis will deliver a huge boon to his constituents and become a hero to the California aerospace industry.

The F-22 is intended to replace the F-15 Eagle as the U.S. "air superiority" fighter, the plane that takes on the other side's best. Its design combines stealth features with vastly improved agility, a generation jump in electronics (especially passive sensor arrays that will afford pilots unprecedented tactical information without revealing their planes' locations), and the first-ever "supercruise," the ability to sustain faster-than-sound flight. (Current combat aircraft can fly at supersonic speed only for a few minutes.) In short, there's little doubt the F-22 would be the hottest combat aircraft ever.

Given the end of the cold war, critics have tried to dismiss the F-22 as an interceptor in search of a target. Since the United States already has air superiority, and the Russians are (for now) out of the game, why is a new wonder-plane needed? Because current U.S. fighters can't last forever. The F-15 Eagle may seem to be the latest thing in the sky, but it has been operational for a quarter of a century. And the reason the United States has air superiority is that America invests considerable sums to build the best flying machines and train the best pilots. That formula served well above Serbia. Keeping U.S. air power a decade ahead of the rest of the world is in the national interest, which means the Eagle must have a successor.

Yet the F-22's sticker price makes you giggle. The prime contractor, Lockheed Martin, admits to $172 million per copy; congressional estimates put the number closer to $200 million. That's four times the cost of an F-15; it's more for a one-seat plane than the price of an entire 747. The F-22 is so expensive that the Air Force plans to produce only 339, versus the current 669 F-15s. Assuming the program survives by "stretching," still fewer F-22s will roll off the lines, at an ever higher individual cost.

Ironically, when the F-22's prototypes met in a "flyoff" in 1991, the program was hailed as a paragon of affordable, market-driven efficiency: unit costs for the finished plane were projected to be only slightly higher than the price of an F-15. But, since 1991, the F-22's price has gone up, up, up, without contractor penalties or anyone held accountable.

There are other nagging signs of deep problems with the development and management of the F-22. When the contract was up for grabs and competitive juices were flowing, it took Lockheed just four years to get prototypes of the F-22 rocketing through the air. But, once it held a monopoly over the contract, the company slowed down—consuming an additional eight years to roll out the first two finished-product models. (Prototype design is supposed to be the hard part.) And, while the prototypes were flung about the sky with buoyant abandon, the first production-grade F-22s are being treated as if they were made of Steuben crystal—so far, they've been flown at supercruise for a grand total of three minutes, even though the whole point of supercruise is extended use. Air Force planners are so nervous about the F-22 that they're already talking about an electronic-jammer version to be called the EF-22. That's something of a desperation sign, considering that, traditionally, fighters are converted to jammers *after* completing their useful service life.

During the early '90s, when the cold war was winding down and budget deficits seemed insurmountable, the Pentagon made some valid steps in the direction of cost-conscious planning. Some of the precision-guided munitions used in Serbia, for example, were both better and less expensive than the weapons they supplanted. But the F-22's price tag suggests that, with the federal budget now in surplus, Pentagon cost discipline is collapsing. That's not a good omen for the modernization even a dominant military always needs.

There remains the question of how to preserve U.S. air superiority. If the F-22 takes flight, every other airplane in the world will eat its vapor trail. But are a relatively small number of extremely expensive piloted planes really the answer for twenty-first-century control of the skies? Planes keep getting more expensive; missiles, guidance, and electronics keep getting cheaper. It's unlikely any foe would try to counter the F-22 by building a traditional fighter to match it, but several nations may soon be able to manufacture relatively cheap missiles that can threaten this most magnificent of flying machines.

The U.S. technical edge, then, might be better employed in beating the world to small, affordable, remotely piloted drone aircraft that would carry advanced missiles into the heart of battle without risking anyone's neck. If I were a military planner trying to decide how to spend the F-22 program's $70 billion price tag, that is the chip upon which I would place my debt.

GREGG EASTERBROOK

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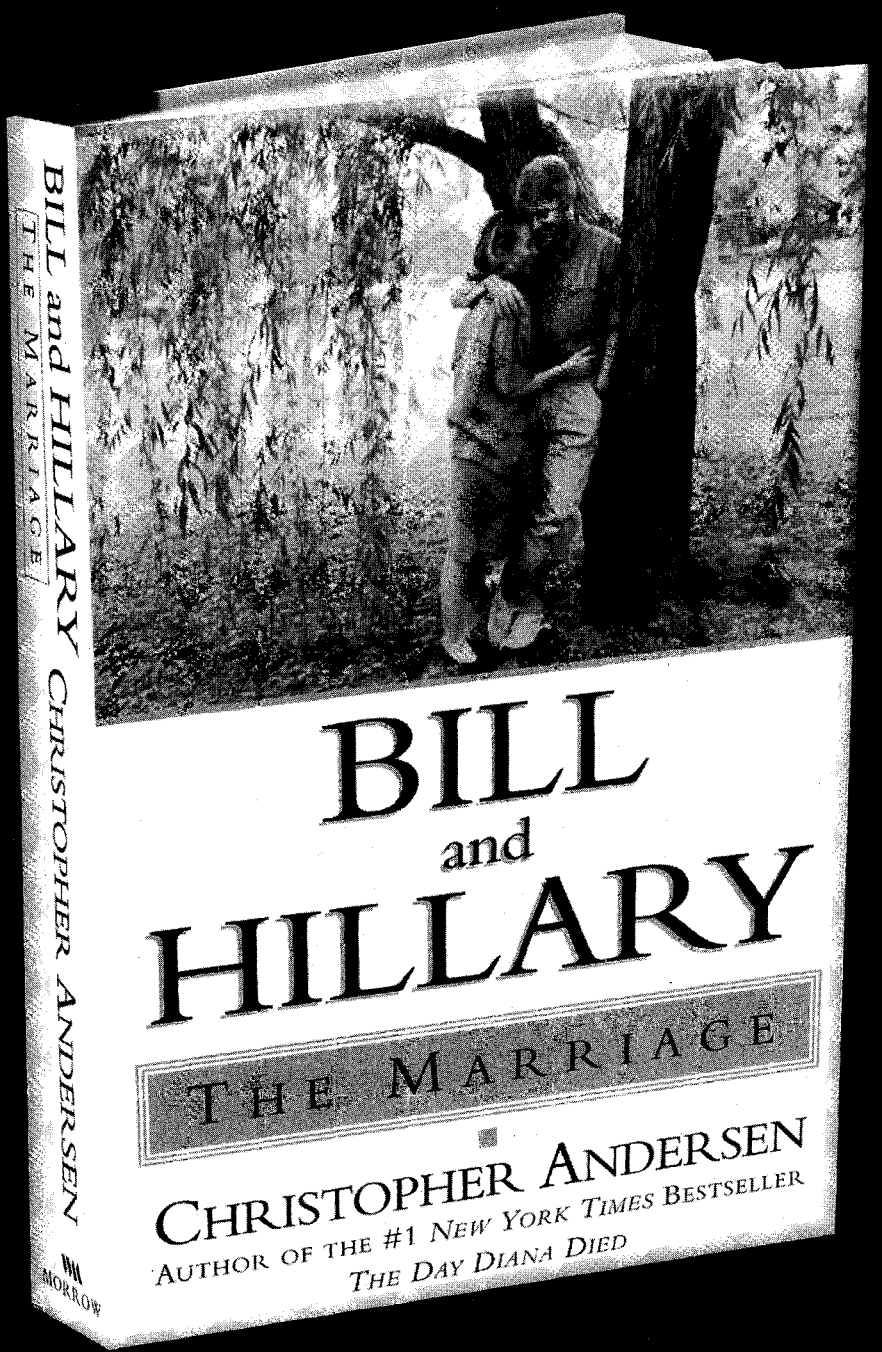

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GREAT PLAINS DISPATCH

Farmed Out

DRIVING ACROSS THE U.S.-Canada border into western Manitoba from North Dakota, we see a few clumps of trees, but not many. The friendly, corn-fed agents at the Carbury/Goodlands border station wear nametags: Bill and Dan. Ours is the only car in sight, and we can see a long way. The biggest surprise are the ducks: pintails, mallards, teal, and others I can't identify. For them, this summer is a bonanza. Nearly every field is flooded, every slough overflows its banks, and the small rivers pulsate. It's been raining for weeks and weeks here, drenching the flat, arid Great Plains with the green humidity of a coastal plain. You can almost smell the ocean.

What's good for waterfowl, though, is bad for farmers. Most got their crops in late, courting fall frost, and some haven't planted at all. For the grain farmers, the weather is just part of another bad year in what, over the past half-decade, has become one of the worst farm crises since the Great Depression. Traveling the gravel roads along the 49th parallel provides a study in agricultural despair: tilted silhouettes of abandoned prairie houses; old, rusting machinery; blockades staged by angry U.S. farmers protesting cheap Canadian grain and livestock.

The Canadians here make unlikely villains. While worldwide prices for wheat are now at their lowest levels in decades, Canadian grain farmers receive fewer price supports or bailouts than their U.S. or European counterparts. "Our government has forgotten about us," says Bob Thomas, the president of a Canadian group of farm activists called the Bengough Rally Group. Of 55,000 farms in Saskatchewan, a sparsely populated province the size of Texas, 15,000 are likely to go out of business this year, says Thomas. "Things have not been this bad since the thirties," he says. "At least during the eighties' farm crisis we could restructure debts and find alternative financing. Today, there isn't a lending institution that wants to touch a farmer."

Even those Canadians who seem comfortable, like Norm and Bev Adams, third-generation farmers, are near despair. The couple runs 100 Charlais cattle in addition to farming wheat, flax, sunflower, and canola on their 1,600 acres. The Adamses also have three small oil wells on their property. "It makes you look like you're well off, but you're not," Norm says. "We're just slowly going broke like the rest of the country." We're sitting in their bright green and white kitchen. A black-and-white photo from 1910 of the farm's steam engine thrasher hangs above the counter. Over supper, Norm shows me a newspaper clipping about the suicide watch: 13 local farmers who call each other daily to check in and share their worries. "So many people have left the country that there's no community anymore," says Norm. "This is the best life right here, eh? What we're doing tonight, sitting around this farm table. And I don't know what's going to replace it."

Sixty miles or so west of the Adamses, on the vast, flat expanse of Saskatchewan east of the Canadian Rockies in Alberta—an area known to some as Gapland—we stop to visit Debbie and David Thompson. They own one of the biggest farms around: ten sections of wheat, canola, mustard, and barley homesteaded or bought by David's great-grandparents starting in 1882. Though the land is flat as a puddle, it's more industrial than I expected. Oil rigs dip into the land like mechanized sandpipers. A crop duster rains down herbicide; speeding semis full of cattle kick up dust. A sign along the road warns us of poisonous hydrogen sulfide gas unearthed along with the oil. But even the oil is running out, says David. He and Debbie, who have been sweethearts since they were 15 years old, are encouraging their children to flee. "The farm jobs won't be here, and the oil jobs won't be here, either," he says. "There's no reason for the kids to stay. Even they can see why we're pushing them off. There's no need in the world for farmers."

From the big picture window in the Thompsons' living room, we can see one of the dozens of abandoned prairie houses along this stretch. It's an elegant, two-story white house with nice proportions and a winding drive. "Those people left twenty years ago," says David, who, wearing glasses and pressed clothes, looks academic for a farmer. "It's not worth it for anyone to fix it up." Down the road, a lone rock with a brass plaque commemorates the site of an abandoned schoolhouse. It's a familiar story. In Saskatchewan, the rural population has decreased by 40 percent since its peak in 1936. The urban population began declining as well in the late '80s. The countryside hasn't been this empty since it was a frontier.

Later, we drive back into the United States, south into Montana's "Durum Triangle," where the caprice of microclimates has led farmers to complain not of floods but of drought. They also complain about severely slumped prices, Canadian export policies, and the 1996 Freedom to Farm Act, which, despite its unintentionally ironic name, has painfully decreased U.S. subsidies to grain farmers. The price of winter wheat this year is $2.50 a bushel, down by nearly 50 percent in three years. In 1950, it was $2, which would equal $13.67 in current dollars, according to the USDA. All these numbers have become familiar to Sharon Nicholson, the woman who coordinates the suicide watch in Canada. "I started doing some informal counseling because I receive a lot of calls," says the 44-year-old farmer and activist. "People want to hear a ray of hope, eh? There is so much desperation out there."

Canada does not categorize suicides by occupation, but in the United States the suicide rate among farmers is three times the national average. Calls to farm stress hotlines in both the United States and Canada have increased steeply during the past two years. Agricultural publications such as *Prairie Star* in Montana and the Mississippi-based *Stockman Grass Farmer*—once purveyors of dry statistical news—now routinely carry tips for dealing with farm stress ("get your emotions out," "find humor in your circumstances").

One man in Milestone, Saskatchewan—where rainfall in the past three months has reached 17.5 inches in an area that normally receives eight inches for the same period—says he hears of about one suicide a week. In both Canada and the United States, farm suicide anecdotes abound. There was the rancher in North Dakota who shot himself and his last ten cows after a recent blizzard. Other farmers walk in front of combines, trying to make their deaths appear accidental so their families can receive life insurance benefits. A friend in Montana tells me the story of his father, who tried to kill himself 30 years ago by attaching a hose to his car exhaust pipe. When it didn't work, he tried to bludgeon himself with a car jack. That didn't work, either. "The family told everyone he had a mechanical accident, but no one believed it because they knew he couldn't even change a tire."

But most people are like the Thompsons, stoic and stubborn as family farmers tend to be, working the farm as if it were a genetic imperative. "We'll be all right," says David Thompson, who only planted ten percent of his seed this year. "What else are we going to do?"

FLORENCE WILLIAMS

The author is a writer living in western Montana.

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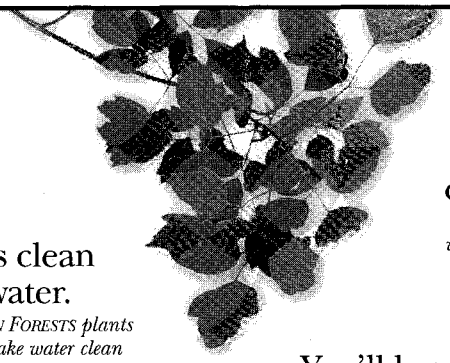

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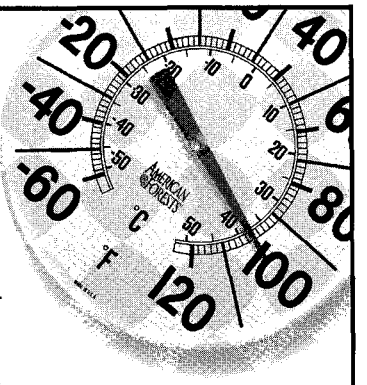

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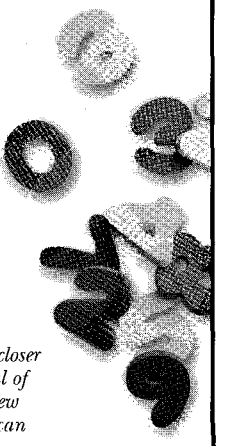

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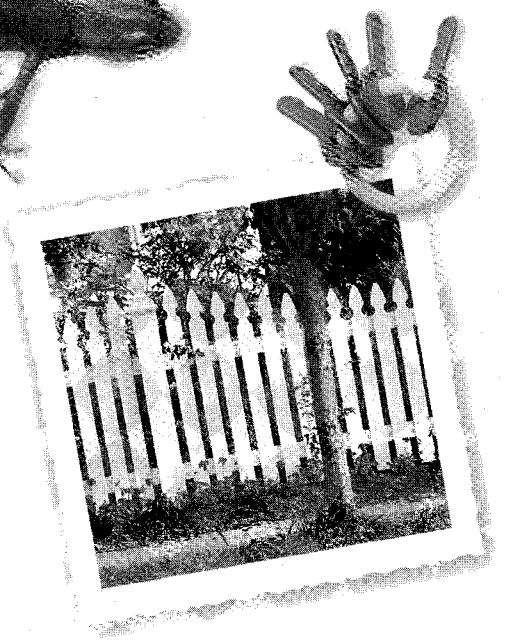

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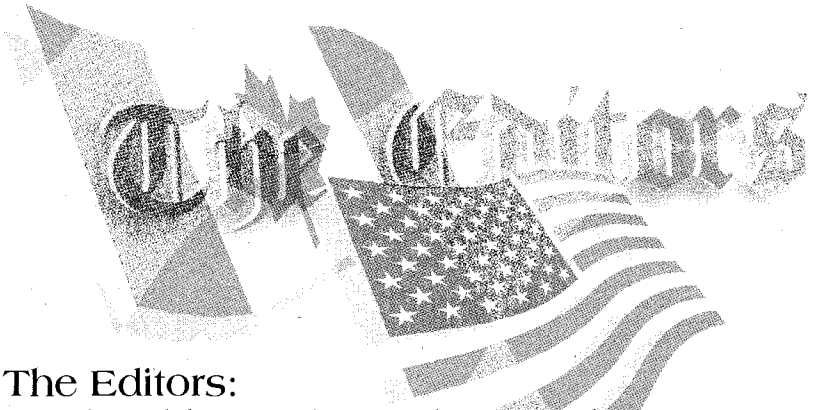

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Trashing Taiwan

WHAT IS THE place of truth in diplomacy? Surely it is an unworldly question. But it is worth asking again in the wake of the American government's response to the suggestion by the president of Taiwan that the myth of "one China" should be put to rest, and the relation of the Chinese mainland to the Chinese island should be construed as a "special state-to-state relationship." In Washington, as in Beijing, the suggestion was universally denounced as reckless, which in a sense it was. But it was also true.

Lee Teng-hui had spoken honestly. For there is not a single China, even if there is a single Chinese people. And the fundamental difference between the two Chinas is perfectly plain. In Taiwan, political liberalization has accompanied economic liberalization (though the description of this extraordinary capitalist powerhouse is almost comically anachronistic). In the People's Republic of China, economic liberalization has resisted political liberalization. In the former, there is capitalism and democracy; in the latter, a vast, ugly experiment in capitalism without democracy.

The Clinton administration moved quickly to undo this unexpected outburst of inconvenient truth. Under the pressure of American diplomats, Lee watered down his remark, but this did not satisfy Secretary of State Madeleine Albright: "The explanations offered thus far don't quite do it." For Albright, it was Lee who had the explaining to do. She was at an ASEAN conference in Singapore busily pursuing "an easing of tensions" with the Chinese foreign minister. "I was quite satisfied with the restoration of communication over a friendly lunch," she reported. (From her observation that the lunch was friendly, we conclude that the words "Los Alamos" were never spoken.)

Tensions had to be "eased" and communications had to be "restored," of course, because they had been made tense and been interrupted by the Chinese, who reacted in a twisted and revealing manner to the accidental American bombing of their embassy in Belgrade in May. After the United States apologized for what was obviously a grievous American miscalculation, Beijing noisily interpreted the bombing as a grievous American calculation and unleashed a violent carnival of anti-Americanism. Even as Albright was delighting in the friendly lunch, in fact, her Chinese interlocutor was stubbornly clinging to the insane Chinese account, telling reporters that the American explanations offered thus far don't quite do it, that "the report [the United States] offered is too strange to be true." But there is no dogma more dogmatic for the Clinton foreign policy apparatus than the creed that nothing must be permitted to interfere with the American courtship of China and its holy market.

The economicist proclivities of the administration's foreign policy are nowhere more clear or more shameful than in its policy toward China. But the administration is not alone in its hunger for Chinese commerce. American business, needless to say, was with the program. (On July 23, the *Los Angeles Times* recorded the frustration of an American venture capitalist that the NATO bombing had put "on hold" his attempt "to expand his multi-million dollar stake in China's booming telecommunications market.") The administration also enjoyed the support of the arch-economicist Thomas Friedman, who loves the Lexus more than the olive tree. "This is no time for provoking clarity," Friedman wrote in *The New York Times* about Lee's expostulation. His reason was that Beijing might go to war. "It was little noticed," he explained, "that last week Standard & Poor's Ratings Service downgraded China's Government debt and the bonds of nine shaky state-backed Chinese banks," and so it was dangerous to rattle Beijing. Anyway, "Taiwan has been recognized by Silicon Valley; it doesn't need to spend billions to be recognized by Suriname"—as if the stakes for Taiwan are the recognition of Suriname. In the AAA-rated universe of Thomas Friedman, dignity is redundant where there is money.

Meanwhile, in this month's issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*, Robert Kaplan deplored "self-righteous hysteria" about the regime in Beijing, which is "the most liberalizing regime in

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Chinese history." Faint praise, that; but Kaplan, for whom the cause of human rights in China is just Western sentimentality, further instructed his summering readers that, in fact, "it has been a long time since the Chinese people have experienced such a degree of security and freedom." Millions of innocent people are no longer executed in China. Hooray!

But the Chinese government quickly made fools of Clinton and Albright and Friedman and Kaplan. Right smack in the middle of the great rapprochement, it demonstrated its undemocratic essence by arresting more than 1,000 members of a strange but apparently benign pseudo-Buddhist religion called Falun Gong, which had demonstrated peacefully against the regime. The point is, of course, that if a regime behaves this way toward the innocuous but unofficially organized members of its own citizenry, how can it be expected to behave toward other peoples and other states? This is the same regime, remember, whose leader had dazzled Americans and their easily dazzled president two years ago with his recitation of the words of Abraham Lincoln. The problem, however, is that the fools don't feel like fools. They are pressing ahead with their timid and greedy policy, and nothing that Beijing does will deflect them from it. This policy is truth-proof. ■

NOTEBOOK

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL: Three days after John F. Kennedy Jr.'s Piper Saratoga plunged into the Atlantic, killing JFK Jr., his wife, and his sister-in-law, two other people were killed when a similar aircraft crashed in bad weather conditions near Socorro, New Mexico. The point here isn't to note the wild imbalance between the coverage of Kennedy's death and the minuscule attention given to other, less celebrated accident victims. Rather, it is to point out how frighteningly common fatal crashes in small planes still are. Thanks to better training and technology, the safety record of general aviation aircraft has improved dramatically since 1982, when the small-plane accident rate was nearly twice what it is today. Still, an astounding 621 people died in small-plane crashes last year, many occurring when rookie pilots who weren't qualified to fly a plane by instruments alone ventured into tough weather conditions such as those that apparently caused JFK Jr. to lose his bearings. At least part of the reason for this is the relatively loose regulations American flyers face compared with their counterparts in other countries. In Canada, for example, you aren't licensed to fly at night without ten hours of night flying with an instructor; in the United States, you need only three. In France, you're not allowed to take off or land at night unless you're "instrument-rated." The general aviation lobby, reflexively opposed to any additional federal regulations, argues that no new regulations are called for in America because our accident rate is still slightly below that of the rest of the world and because, ultimately, there's no protection against bad pilot judgment. But that's precisely the point: given that there will always be inexperienced pilots who decide to fly at night over water when they probably shouldn't, wouldn't it be better to have a federal rule to protect them—and their unwitting passengers—from themselves? If Congress wants to build an appropriate memorial to JFK Jr., perhaps a new law limiting non-instrument-rated pilots to daytime flights over land would be an appropriate place to start.

CREATIVE FINANCING: Remember all that huffing and puffing from the GOP about devolution and the need to funnel money down to the state level? It was the hallmark of the 1996 welfare reform law, according to which Congress eliminated the federal welfare program, Aid to Families With Dependent Children, and replaced it with block grants—money it handed over to the states that the states could then spend on welfare programs as they saw fit. The idea was that states knew best how to spend their welfare money, and, indeed, a number of states spent it so wisely that they were able to meet their citizens' welfare needs and actually save some of the block grant money in the process. Well, now that House Republicans are looking for cash to fund 13 spending bills, they're thinking about asking for the money back. Republican Whip Tom DeLay wants to ask the nation's governors to return the $6 billion they have accumulated in saved welfare funds. House Speaker Denny Hastert has seconded DeLay's idea. So much for encouraging thrift.

REBEL WITHOUT A CLUE: Nebraska Senator Bob Kerrey has always considered himself a bit of a maverick, but was it really necessary for him to break party ranks last week and cast one of the two Democratic votes for the Republican-sponsored $792 billion tax cut proposal when it came before the Senate Finance Committee? Although Kerrey, in a *Washington Post* op-ed, defended his vote on the grounds that the Republican plan constituted "broad-based tax relief aimed squarely at the middle class," the proposal is really directed at the upper middle and upper classes, who, because they pay the most taxes, will benefit the most from the across-the-board ten percent income tax reduction. Kerrey's vote is even more curious since he has also portrayed himself as a deficit hawk willing to forgo politically expedient decisions. In 1993, Kerrey grandstanded in his wavering about whether to vote for the Clinton administration's deficit-reduction plan—a plan that he said wasn't austere enough when it came to funding entitlement programs. He ended up voting for it, but only when Clinton agreed to make him the cochair of a special bipartisan commission on tax and entitlement reform. So why did Kerrey vote now for the instant dissipation of America's hard-won budget surplus? It undoubtedly had nothing to do with the fact that the bill included a special provision that expands the fraction of publicly traded shares a private foundation can control—a provision supported by his Nebraska constituent, Omaha billionaire Warren Buffett. In 1993, casting his vote for the budget-reduction plan, Kerrey declared, "I implore you, Mr. President, say 'no' to us." Kerrey will get that wish this time, when, as is inevitable, President Clinton vetoes this inadvisable bill. ■

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Jamaica Dispatch

Roots of Violence

By Ed Vulliamy

KINGSTON

Christine Hamilton leans photographs of her daughter against a shrine off Mountain View Road and lights the first of what will soon be a thicket of candles. In her pictures, 17-year-old Kemisha smiles like a flower in bloom. There's one of her in her school tie, another in a pretty dress, and another with her mother, making a silly grin.

The lanes nearby are lined with lovingly wrought iron-work gates and lambent purple flowers. Lush jungle tumbles down the slopes above. It looks like paradise, but it's not. Because when hell comes to paradise, paradise becomes hell. A fortnight ago, little Kemisha was gang-raped, then butchered and mutilated—her throat cut and her face burned beyond recognition during a rampage by one of the gangs of criminal thugs, called "Yardies," that are vying for control of Kingston. "She was my only child," says her mother. "When she was murdered, I wondered to myself whether maybe some people are too beautiful to live in this world."

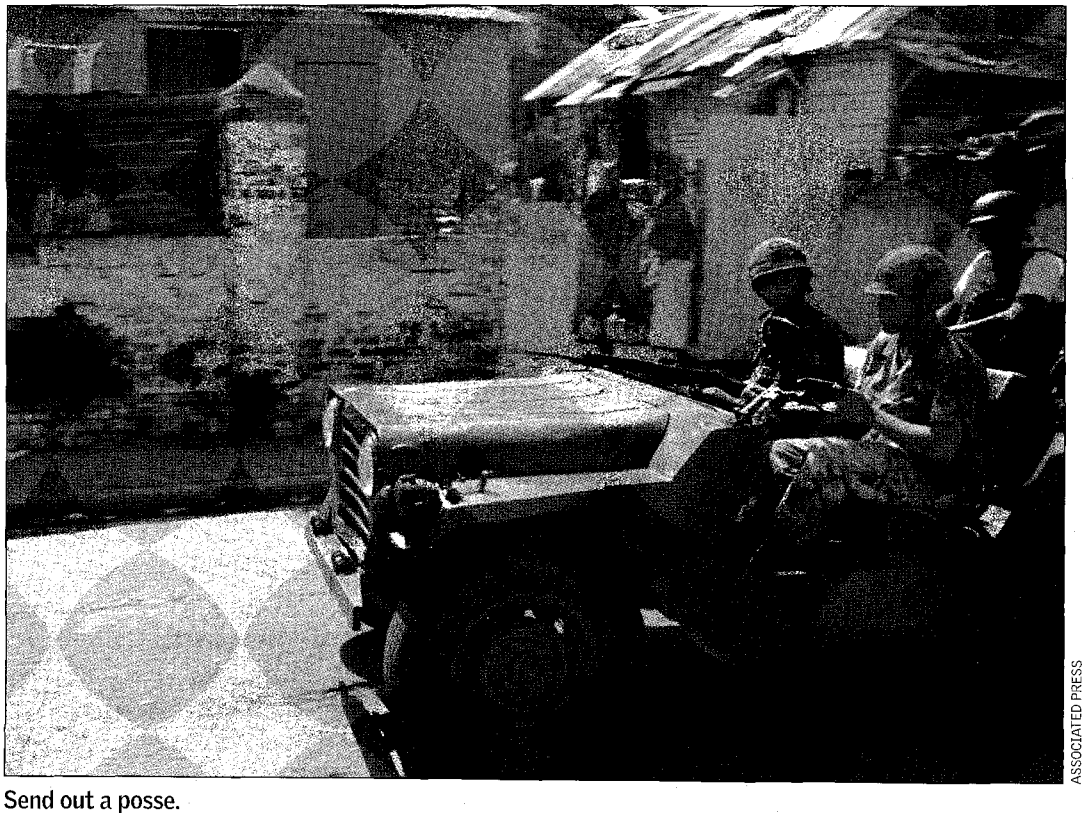
Kemisha is one of the younger—though by no means the youngest—victims of a frenzy of violence that has swept through Jamaica with ever-increasing force, leaving 66 people dead in 17 days and bringing the total of gang-related deaths to 505 for this year alone. Considering the size of this tiny Caribbean island, the current crime wave is nothing short of a national crisis—the proportional equivalent of 100,000 murders a year in the United States. Yet the murders plaguing Jamaica have gone largely unnoticed in the United States.

The current violence actually has its roots in the 1970s, when the island's rival political parties—the ruling People's National Party and the opposition Jamaica Labour Party—armed citizens to create what were called political "garrisons" in the ghetto—in effect, military wings of each party's election machinery. By the mid '80s, the militias had expanded into drug smuggling, gorging on the boom in marijuana sales as well as on Jamaica's increasingly significant role as a transit point for Colombian cocaine traffickers. (Just last week, five Colombians were arrested here for coming ashore illegally and are being questioned about cocaine smuggling.)

As they grew in strength, the most powerful gang leaders, who often have strong ties to the United States and Britain, have become an international menace. Last week, Vivian Blake, leader of the "Shower Posse," was extradited from Jamaica to the United States on charges of complicity in approximately 1,500 drug-related murders in the United States. It's far more common, however, for the United States and the U.K. to deport violent Jamaican criminals back to the island, adding further fuel to the fire already raging.

Today, the gangs of Yardies, also known as "Dons," have little need for assistance from politicians. "They have taken on their own life, become their own Frankensteins," says Shirley Byfield, spokeswoman for the Security Ministry. Indeed, many of the gang leaders are now big-time operators—not just dealing drugs but also acting as community managers and even running their own social welfare schemes. "The Yardies have a better intelligence network than the police," concedes Delroy Chuck, a member of Jamaica's parliament. "They also offer better protection for businesses than the police."

Of course, that protection comes with a heavy price. Rival gangs continually battle over turf, leaving a virtual mountain of bodies in their wake. In one recent case, a man was executed by a variation on the guillotine: made to kneel with his



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Send out a posse.

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head on the rim of a car trunk as the lid was slammed shut. And this capital city is divided into a crazy quilt of heavily contested neighborhoods with names such as Jungle, Tivoli, and Tel Aviv, each teeming with armed youths ready to use their firepower at the slightest provocation. One group of boys even set up a roadblock to demand that a local soccer hero be selected for the "Reggae Boyz" national team.

During a trip through Kingston last week, the Yardies' presence was pervasive. On a scrap of land in Trench Town—an inner-city shantytown built of corrugated metal, slat wood, and stacked trash cans—Everton, a boy not more than 13 years old, was toying with a soccer ball. His only attire was a pair of adidas shorts with a revolver stuck in them. He is a member of the Kool Kids Krew, he said, which is connected to Horanis "Howie" Mattis, a local Yardie, because, as Everton explained, "Howie is cool."

AT THE NEARBY Golden Pub, the talk was also of Howie. The previous week "some fool hit Howie's mother," Curtis Philips, a patron, explained. The man was soon dead, shot in the back of the head. His buddies quickly had their own revenge, taking out three of Howie's men. Before long, the dispute had escalated into a major gun battle, and hundreds of residents were forced to seek refuge in the local police station as bullets flew and houses burned.

The week before, the denizens of Red Hills Road were caught in a similar shooting spree that claimed six lives. As I drove over to check out the aftermath, the rain was pouring down so hard it almost threatened to wash away the clusters of roadside stalls selling cigarettes and mangoes. The focal points of the previous week's events were Park Lane and One Hundred Lane, two parallel alleys leading into the groves of banana trees at the edge of town. The two streets, which are controlled by rival Yardies, are at war. The most recent flare-up began when a member of the Park Lane gang apparently stole a video camera belonging to a One Hundred Laner. The aggrieved camera owner and his men stormed a house in which four Park Laners were hiding and summarily executed them. As usual, hundreds of residents were forced to flee the ensuing violence.

They were wise to do so. Many of this year's murder victims have been bystanders caught in the crossfire. One of them was Clyde Gooden, a relative of Kemisha's, who walked into a shoot-out on his way home a few days ago. "He was unaware of anything, walking as a man would," says his sister, Claudette Chin. "There were multiple bullets," she adds, wincing slightly. "Multiple bullets."

And then there are those innocents who, like Kemisha, are targeted on purpose. Agatha Nelson, a 67-year-old newspaper vendor, was among those killed when the Red Hills Road war got ugly. No one wants to say why she died except for a blind, elderly Rasta with a staff and two goats. "They say she was dissing on the Park Lane gang. Informer. But she never," he says. "She a decent lady."

ED VULLIAMY is U.S. bureau chief for *The Observer* of London.

The Jamaican government is belatedly—if less than fully—acknowledging its role in sowing the seeds for today's violence. "There had to be some result of what was done in those days," says the Security Ministry's Shirley Byfield. And, this July, the government embarked on a major crackdown on the Yardies, mobilizing some 500 soldiers to assist the 7,000-strong police force in a mop-up operation through Kingston's 15 most dangerous districts. Throughout the week that followed, Kingston echoed with the grinding of army trucks over potholes, the crack of shotguns, and the whir of hovering helicopters as the authorities conducted house-to-house searches for illegal weapons and wanted criminals.

They appear to have had some success. And the operation has certainly helped rehabilitate the image of the police, who were long suspected of having ties to the gangsters but are now led by a tough new commissioner. Still, given the dismal state of Jamaica's economy—unemployment is estimated at between 25 and 30 percent—it's unlikely that the government will be able to fund the current crackdown indefinitely. And there's little doubt about what will happen once the army and police withdraw.

Greater hope, however, may lie in a war that is being prepared against the Yardies by what Jamaicans call "the Roots"—the people and their culture. All day and all night, the reggae stations broadcast exasperation and impatience across the FM airwaves. Karl Young, manager of IRIE-FM—"the greatest reggae station in the universe"—has made it his mission to declare war on the gangs, in the reggae language of apocalypse. "It is now a week since the volcano of violence erupted around us. The buzzword is peace. Peace in our beloved island!" he cries.

THE MUSIC INDUSTRY has taken its own direct hits. Michael Wallace, a longtime member of the band Chalice who was recently recruited to join the superstar band Third World, was shot at point-blank range just a week ago. But perhaps Jamaica's greatest loss that week was that of Dennis Brown, the third member of the reggae trinity that also includes Bob Marley and Peter Tosh. Brown's death, on the day the army was mobilized, was not the result of violence. Still, his life's message was a kind of sermon against the sort of violence from which Kingston is reeling, and it was perhaps for that as much as for their love of his music that so many thousands of Jamaicans gathered to pay homage to his body, which lay in state at the headquarters of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, the Rastafarian Church. Banners had proclaimed their tributes to the "Crown Prince" all across town, and now the mourners passed through a white wooden gazebo in which Brown lay in a white coffin, his locks arrayed across the sheets.

After coming out on the other side of the gazebo, the mourners stood under the shelter of the trees, pulling pensively on the weed and jigging gently to the words of one of Brown's most popular anthems: "Someday a time will come when we'll weep no more." For now, though, it looks as if that day will be a long time coming. ■

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Conservatives turn inward.

Isolated

By JACOB HEILBRUNN

WHAT DO THE Heritage Foundation, *The American Spectator*, Jack Kemp, and Pat Buchanan have in common with *The Nation*? All opposed the war in Kosovo—and they continue to oppose it today, despite the fact that President Clinton and NATO forced the Serbs to retreat from the province. "In a sortie to Arlington Cemetery on Memorial Day," *The American Spectator* sneered in its July issue, "President Clinton tried not to trash the place the way he has Pristina, Belgrade, and other Yugoslav spots." Kemp was, if anything, even more caustic: "NATO proved right?" he asked in the June 27 *Washington Times*. "The truth of this war is the exact opposite of the establishment's portrayal." Clinton, said Kemp, carried out an "international Waco" in Kosovo, and "we must begin to lead the world by example and with diplomacy, not by bluster and bombs."

Conservatives' rhetoric was just as fiery during the war itself. In early June, while Serbs were slaughtering ethnic Albanians in Kosovo and NATO bombs were falling on Belgrade, Buchanan parroted Slobodan Milosevic's line that "it is neither just nor is it moral for a superpower to ravage the civilian economy of a country for refusing to give up sacred land that has belonged to Serbia for generations." For good measure, Buchanan added, "I've never come closer to being ashamed of my country than when I see us bombing." Republican Representative Doug Ose of California declared on May 11 that "Social Security money [is] being used to destroy day care centers, schools, churches, and the like."

It used to be liberal Democrats, in Jeane Kirkpatrick's memorable phrase, who blamed America first when it intervened abroad. America, the left claimed, was on the wrong side of history in viewing legitimate national self-determination movements as Communist-dominated. America's moral decay, the left reasoned, meant that it had nothing to offer the rest of the world other than the example of a republic that had degenerated into a corrupt and militaristic empire. So pervasive was the left's belief in the connection between American internal rot and imperialism that sociologist Paul Hollander even coined a term for it—the adversary culture.

Today, however, it is mainly conservatives who make up a new adversary culture. Hatred of Bill Clinton played a part, but many conservatives' opposition to the war in Kosovo was also prompted by their dismay with the current state of American values—and their opposition to seeing those values spread abroad. Distraught by America's moral decline, they have turned inward, adopting wholesale rhetoric and sentiments that once belonged to the left. As Walter McDougall, editor of the conservative journal *Orbis*, has commented approvingly: "Asians and Muslims laugh at the notion that 'decadent' America could be a model for them."

TO BE SURE, there's long been an isolationist streak among conservatives. It dates back to the days when Ohio Senator Robert Taft led the GOP in championing isolationism both on the eve of World War II and during the beginning of the cold war. What makes the current strain of conservative isolationism so startling, however, is its pessimism about the moral fitness of America.

One early sign of a new conservative *Kulturpessimismus* appeared in an article titled "All That Jazz" by neoconservative doyen Irving Kristol in the Summer 1992 *National Interest*. Kristol argued that America surely had a lot to offer other nations—but much of it was a bad thing. "[W]hen we witness the extraordinary popularity of rock music in all its forms and versions," Kristol wrote, "one has reason to think that we may well be exporting a principle of instability into the cultural and political existence of these nations. We are not exporting a comparable 'high' culture since we have none to export." America's increasing ethnic diversity and its consequent populism, wrote Kristol, meant that it was "discarding" its old affiliation to Europe, thereby "debas[ing]" its culture. Kristol's conclusion: "I am not happy that the United States even *has* this popular culture to export."

Another sign of conservative apprehension about American values can be found in conservatives' embrace of so-called Asian values. Take the case of Michael Fay, the American teenager sentenced to caning for illegal spray painting in Singapore in 1994. While the case horrified many Americans, a number of conservatives thought Fay was getting what he deserved—and were angry that in the United States he would have gotten off with more lenient treatment. In a column published during the Fay controversy, Buchanan declared: "It is our moral elite's distance from reality ... that induce[s] a moral paralysis when it comes to punishing domestic enemies."

Perhaps the most telling example of the conservative loss of faith in American values can be found in the transformation of Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington. In 1991, Huntington declared that a "third wave" of democracy was washing over the globe. By 1996, however, defending Asian values, Huntington denounced the U.S. promotion of democracy as "false" and "immoral." Huntington, like the New Left, was skeptical about what the United States had to export. "What ... does it tell about the West when Westerners identify their civilization with fizzy liquids, faded pants, and fatty foods?" Huntington asked.

Conservatives maintained that America needed to get its own house in order before it started worrying about international affairs. Andrew J. Bacevich, a professor of international relations at Boston University (and an occasional TNR contributor), asked in the pages of *First Things*, a monthly religious journal: "To the extent that basic national policies disregard the moral sense of the majority, to the extent that American government no longer embodies the popular will, what are the implications for the United States as a global

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superpower?" His answer, according to Lawrence F. Kaplan, writing in *The Weekly Standard*: Even if it "bear[s] an uncomfortable resemblance to conclusions once touted by the Left," America should obey George McGovern's call to come home and heal itself.

WHEN THE UNITED STATES intervened in Kosovo, many conservatives not only opposed the war but tried to portray the effort itself as further evidence of America's moral decrepitude. *First Things* editor Richard John Neuhaus, a former leftist turned neoconservative, declared in his magazine's May issue that "[a]s the world's only superpower, we are beginning to look very much like a high-tech bully imposing our will on the cheap [sic]." Neuhaus's only hope was that the U.S. intervention in Kosovo might rouse Americans from their complacent lull and alert them to the sorry state of their country under Clinton. "The enormity of this President's corruption and crimes will finally sink in and trigger the long-delayed outrage," Neuhaus wrote. "Maybe the turning point will come with the arrival of the body bags from another misbegotten foreign venture."

Ultimately, these leftists-turned-conservatives looked back to the days of their youth for inspiration—back, that is, to the tactics used by the New Left in decrying Vietnam. David Horowitz, a conservative firebrand who, in his previous incarnation as a radical leftist, protested against Vietnam during the '60s, argued in a May article in *Salon* that, as in Vietnam, the United States was meddling where it didn't belong. Seemingly unconscious of the exquisite irony, Horowitz declared, "Again, we are intruding into a civil war, again we are applying 'coercive diplomacy' ineffectively, trying to bring a nationalist adversary to the negotiating table."

Another antiwar line trotted out by conservatives was the charge that the U.S. commander-in-chief was behaving like an imperial president, ignoring his constitutional duty to seek congressional approval of the war. Just as Representative Ron Dellums filed suit against George Bush in 1990 over the Gulf war, so, in April, a bipartisan group of congressmen lodged a federal lawsuit against Clinton for violating the 1973 War Powers Resolution. Explained one of the litigious congressmen, Texas Republican Ron Paul: "This president has violated the law, and he must be taken to task." Writing in the Summer 1999 *National Interest*, Bacevich called for a return to the principles of historian Charles Beard (who opposed World War II) and declared that those who "accused presidents of abusing their authority and of undermining the Constitution" have usually been denounced as "cranks," but with Kosovo the "critics ... may yet have their day."

That day hasn't yet arrived. But it's doubtful that conservatives will give up until it does. The more pessimistic conservatives become about the state of the Union, the more they oppose American intervention abroad. With so much anti-American vitriol now spewing from the ranks of the right, it's a wonder that *The Nation* hasn't had to close up shop. ■

Preparing for the next population explosion.

Money Hungry

By CHARLES C. MANN

THIRTY YEARS AGO, many smart people believed that, by now, the population explosion would have knocked the world into a catastrophic famine, killing hundreds of millions of people. Ecologist Paul Ehrlich, author of *The Population Bomb*, predicted back then that Japan would run out of food, while an armada of famished Chinese would invade Russia. Needless to say, the predictions were wrong: although the number of humans on Earth has almost doubled since 1960, there are fewer hungry people now than there were four decades ago. Just eight percent of humankind now lives in nations with insufficient average calorie intakes; according to the U.N. Food and Agricultural Organization, that represents the lowest such percentage in human history.

Today's relatively abundant world food supply is attributable to agricultural research and development, which has produced what is known as the Green Revolution—high-yield varieties of wheat and rice and the fertilization and irrigation techniques necessary to grow them. Private foundations played a part in the Green Revolution, but the great majority of the work was funded by governments. Indeed, the global agriculture research system is one of the century's leading governmental success stories.

That research system, however, is in the process of being dismantled. Across the world, funding agencies lulled into complacency are pruning agricultural R&D. Global public investment in agriculture rose (in constant 1985 dollars) from $7.3 billion in 1971 to $15 billion in 1991, the last year for which consistent data is available. But the rate of increase slowed during the '80s and seems to have crawled almost to a halt in this decade. In the developing world, annual growth rates for agricultural R&D have slipped from 6.4 percent for the period between 1971 and 1981 to 3.9 percent between 1981 and 1991, and they continue to fall. In Africa, the hungriest region in the world, agricultural R&D spending has not increased since the early '80s, and many African nations have drastically reduced funding.

This wouldn't matter if the world's future food supply were guaranteed to meet demand. But it isn't. For one thing, the human population continues to increase and will do so for at least two more generations; by 2020, the planet will have approximately 1.6 billion more mouths to feed than it does now. As the world's population rises, so will the world's affluence, thanks to the transition to market economies in the developing world; and, although increased affluence is

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certainly desirable, it will increase the strain on the global food supply as citizens of the developing world begin both to eat more in total and to shift their desires up the food chain toward poultry and beef, which require grain to raise. The combination of population increases and more widespread affluence, according to the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), means that the global demand for food in 2020 will be 40 percent higher than it is today.

As was the case with the last population explosion, the coming population boom doesn't have to lead to famine; the past 30 years are a testament to the fact that investing significantly in agricultural R&D can go a long way toward shoring up the world's food supply. But, if complacency causes agricultural R&D to continue its downward slide, world leaders may set in motion an entirely avoidable cycle of famines. "Look at the projections of the world population going to ten billion," says Ruben Echeverria, an economist at the Inter-American Development Bank. "It's going to be ten billion with less farmland than now, because cities are growing. It doesn't take a Ph.D. to figure out that something will have to happen with productivity. How are you going to do that without investing in agricultural research?"

AGRICULTURAL R&D IS a pyramid. At the apex is the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), a network of 16 international laboratories that includes the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), in the Philippines, and the International Center for Maize and Wheat Improvement, in Mexico—the two centers that produced the "super rice" and "super wheat" that spawned the Green Revolution. Below the CGIAR labs are scores of national research centers such as the National Institute of Agricultural Technology, in Argentina, and the Institute of Arable Crop Research, in Britain. And below these national labs, closer to the farmer, are hundreds of local and regional experimental stations and extension programs. Institutions at the top of the pyramid develop new techniques and resources; institutions on the bottom adapt them to local conditions and pass them on to farmers. The whole structure, invisible to most people, is as essential to contemporary life as the power grid.

The CGIAR labs and their offshoots have been spectacularly successful, as the ever-declining incidence of world hunger attests. Indeed, economists generally believe that agricultural research is one of the best ways governments can spend money. According to D. Gale Johnson, a University of Chicago economist and president of the American Economics Association, a good rate of return on private-sector R&D is 15 to 20 percent per year. Publicly funded agricultural research, by contrast, typically yields a measured rate of return of 40 percent or more—"a good return by any measure," says Johnson. Even the most contrarian view of publicly funded agricultural research—a controversial analysis published last year by Julian M. Alston of the University of California at Davis, Barbara J. Craig of Oberlin College, and Philip G. Pardey of IFPRI—found that its rate of return is roughly equivalent to that of private-sector R&D. Still, Pardey says, creating and maintaining the institutional structure for agricultural research has been "a terrific investment for society."

Despite these impressive rates of return, investment in

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THE FIFTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Friday, 29 October

2:00-4:00 p.m. *World Literature.* Chair: **John Ellis** (UC Santa Cruz).
Sir Hugh Lloyd Jones (Oxford): "Goethe and the Greeks."
Michael Moses (Duke): "Magical Realism as a World Genre."
Gary Saul Morson (Northwestern): "Dostoevsky and the Literature of Process."

4:30-5:30 p.m. Poetry Reading by **Charles Wright** from his work in progress.

Saturday, 30 October

9:00-11:00 noon. *Cervantes in a World Context.* Chair: **Dario Fernandez-Morera** (Northwestern).
Diana Wilson (University of Denver): "Cervantes and the Indies."
Howard Young (Pomona): "Conversations between Don Quixote and Sancho Panza."
James Parr (UC Riverside): "Don Quixote: Translation and Interpretation."

2:00-4:00 p.m. *The Humanities in the Undergraduate Curriculum.* Chair: **Mark Bauerlein** (Emory).
Kathy Eden (Columbia University): "The Great Books in the Undergraduate Curriculum."
John Briggs (UC Riverside): "Composition and the Humanities."
Thomas F. Bertonneau (ALSC): "Orality, Literacy, and the Humanities."

8:00 p.m. Banquet, followed by an address by **Sir Ferdinand Mount,** Editor in Chief, *Times Literary Supplement.*

Sunday, 31 October (Concurrent Sessions)

9:00-11:00 a.m. *Charles Wright, Poet and Three Critics.* Chair: **Eleanor Cook** (University of Toronto).
Bonnie Costello (Boston University): "The Passions of Charles Wright."
James Longenbach (University of Rochester): "The Landscapes of Charles Wright."
Willard Spiegelman (Southern Methodist University): "On Charles Wright."

Romantic Poetry. Chair: **Norman Fruman** (University of Minnesota).
Robert Gleckner (Duke): "Humpty Dumpty Blake."
Jerome McGann (University of Virginia): "Millennial Romanticism."
James Engell (Harvard): "Romantic Poems and Ideas."

Drama: Classic to Renaissance. Chair: **Mary Lefkowitz** (Wellesley).
Charles Marowitz (Malibu Stage Company): "Shakespearean Acting – Clue to Action."
Tom Hester (North Carolina State): "Reading the 'Tale' in The Merchant of Venice."
Eric Gans (UCLA): "Aeschylus to Racine – Drama's Internal Scene."

The conference registration fee of $70 ($40 for junior members) covers all meetings and events, as well as coffee breaks and Saturday dinner. For room reservations call the New York Marriott: 212-938-9100. To register for the conference, or for further information about the ALSC, write to ALSC, 105 S. Franklin, No. 220, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48858, USA. Phone: 517-772-7228. Email: alitsc@aol.com.

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agricultural R&D is waning—and the CGIAR system is beginning to feel the financial pinch. Funding in real terms for CGIAR programs as a whole has stagnated since 1990. And, at some facilities, funding has actually declined: the budget for IRRI, one of the cradles of the Green Revolution, dropped from $43.6 million in 1993 to $35.4 million in 1997; in that year, the center eliminated 576 positions, which amounted to about half its staff. Moreover, since scientists must contend with pests and diseases that coevolve with crops and thus become more adept at dodging farmers' control methods, a good deal of agricultural R&D involves simply trying to maintain current harvests rather than working to meet tomorrow's needs. In this sense, a flattening budget for agricultural R&D is actually a shrinking budget.

THE EFFECTS OF cutbacks can't be rectified quickly. Like pharmaceutical products, new strains of wheat, rice, and corn take more than a decade to develop and test. "It's politically attractive to shrink funding today, because you can coast for an administration or two on your past investment," says Vernon Ruttan, an agricultural economist at the University of Minnesota. "But, when you need the productivity, you can't just turn on the spigot—you have to wait fifteen years."

In some wealthy countries, the slowdown in public R&D has been offset by growth in private R&D, chiefly from big biotech outfits such as Monsanto and Novartis. But privatization is not a cure-all. "There's a reason agricultural research has historically been the province of the public sector," Johnson explains. "Farmers didn't have the capital to do research themselves. And private firms wouldn't do it for them, because the products of agricultural research were public goods. Once you'd developed a new variety of wheat, then anyone could reproduce it simply by harvesting the wheat and getting the seed. If you developed a new breed or better strain, you couldn't get the benefit, because it was perfectly legal to copy it." Private companies thus devoted their research budgets to farm and food-processing machinery, products on which they could recoup their investments.

In 1980, a Supreme Court decision to allow patents on genetically engineered products made it possible for companies to stop farmers from legally copying new plant and animal breeds. Although this ruling is reviled by anti-genetic-engineering activists, it has set off an explosion of innovation. Last year alone, about 45 million acres of U.S. cropland were planted with transgenic corn, soybeans, potatoes, and other produce. (Although the new crops are generally more cost-effective, their impact on the environment remains a subject of dispute.) The problem is that Monsanto and its competitors are "designing" crops mainly for the high-tech farms of the West—the farms that promise high profit margins. Targeting the world's poorest farmers is not a sensible business strategy. But new crops designed for impoverished places—the kind of crops IRRI and similar agencies specialize in—are the plants most urgently needed.

Because of the boom in private research, Americans are unlikely to feel the direct consequences of the cutback in public-sector agricultural R&D. Food prices are at historic lows; people in rich countries can afford to pay a little more if food becomes relatively scarcer. But matters are different for the world's poor. "In some warm climates, you can get food being more than seventy-five percent of people's budget, with half of that being spent on rice," says Robert E. Evenson, director of Yale's Economic Growth Center. "If rice prices are twenty percent higher than they otherwise would be, that's not a small thing." With computer models, he says, "you can calculate the effects of this price rise on the percent of children who would be undernourished." The result? "It's pretty clear," Evenson says. "When you don't pay attention to research now, you end up with a lot more hungry children than you would otherwise." And that *will* affect Americans, because their government will undoubtedly be called upon to help feed the unfortunate.

In 1990, the United States contributed $45 million to the CGIAR system. To maintain the same level of funding after inflation, this year's total would have to be over $56 million. Instead, it's $40 million—in real terms, a cutback of about a third. Meanwhile, the U.S. Department of Agriculture is spending more than $1 billion—25 times what it spends on agricultural R&D—on international food aid: that is, giving away food that's already grown. Rarely has the old saying "give a man a fish and he'll eat for a day, teach him to fish and he'll eat for a lifetime" seemed more relevant—and the price of ignoring it costlier. ■

Campaign Journal

Amateur Night

By DANA MILBANK

DEARBORN, Michigan

THINGS ARE GETTING desperate at the Reform Party National Convention. Why, Reformers wonder, doesn't anybody want the party's presidential nomination? Jesse Ventura, who missed his speaking slot at the convention because bad weather grounded his flight, calls to tell delegates they shouldn't even think about nominating him. Colin Powell won't do it, and Donald Trump and Pat Buchanan don't seem serious about it, either. Ross Perot now seems too goofy to be credible, and Lowell Weicker, who *is* seriously considering it, is hardly a franchise name.

But those who fear for the Reform Party's future haven't met Erik Thompson. Thompson, a quiet, bearded man in blue jeans, approaches me at a reception and offers me his business card. "CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT, REFORM PARTY," it reads, along with his name and slogan: "NO WAR NOW!!" Candidate Thompson tells me that the combination of his message (abolishing the standing army) and experience (three months in a federal penitentiary for trespassing at a nuclear installation) should give him a 30 percent chance of winning the Reform nomination. "I'm going to do what Jesse did in Minnesota," he vows. Ventura's victory has made Thompson giddy. "What if I win?" he wonders excitedly.

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Thompson won't win, however, unless he's able to conquer the indomitable Jerry Beck. "I *am* the front-runner," says Beck, who ran as an independent in 1996 but with "not very good" results (he claims to have made the ballot only in his hometown of Windsor, Missouri, which is not legally possible). This time Beck plans to go all out. "We have a full political seminar set up, and we take five musicians with us," he boasts. Beck's chief rival is Charles Collins, who has no musicians but does have a big idea. "You could eradicate six trillion dollars in a single day," he tells me, simply by buying the stock of the Federal Reserve so "you wouldn't have to pay the debt." Collins, holding forth poolside at the Hyatt Regency, says his scheme would cost $462 million, and he has a 1966 letter from Senator Russell Long to prove it. Collins would also "triple GDP in one year" with a simple plan: eliminate all taxes.

Still not sold? Consider pulling the lever for Harvey Carroll Jr., who totes around a campaign sign painted by his brother and hands out business cards on photocopy paper. He ran for the state legislature as a Democrat but became a Republican during the Bush years because, he believes, he was secretly directing Bush's foreign policy by faxing advice to the CIA and the State Department. "I actually put words in both Bush's and Gorbachev's mouths," he says, then hesitates. "This is sort of classified. If you can water it down, that's cool."

As Ross Perot might say, the crazy aunts have come out of the basement. And this, unfortunately, is becoming the story of the Reform Party. Ventura's gubernatorial victory has convinced Reform Party members that just about any wild scenario (such as a Trump candidacy) is now possible, and the party's ballot access, along with $12.6 million in federal campaign funds for 2000, has attracted the usual assortment of characters—note perennial left-wing fringe candidate Lenora Fulani's interest. At the convention, a fellow mutters to himself as he circulates a petition for low-power radio stations. After one press conference, a party member shouts about "goddamn Communists" and about how the CIA killed JFK. Odd characters always show up at conventions, of course, but here they seem to *be* the convention. I expect to find the water fluoridation protesters at any moment; one reporter whispers during a session, "Where's the UFO meeting?"

One of Ventura's strategists explains that the loons who have been drummed out of the other parties have flocked to the Reform Party, and it has yet to weed them out. "I have been banned from all Democratic bulletin boards because I dared to discuss issues," reads an e-mail on one of the Reform Party listservs, which are full of rants. "I have been stopped from posting to any Republican bulletin board for the same reason." Thus is another Reform Party activist born.

Reformers seem incredulous that their star, Ventura, won't run for president. "Sorry folks, it's not going to happen," his website proclaims. And yet they yearn. Max Shaffer, dressed up as Uncle Sam in a beard, top hat, and matching bow tie, wears his "Draft Jesse" button, like so many others who have gathered in Dearborn. "He's been an actor for how many years?" Shaffer asks. Maybe he's just faking his lack of interest now. Or maybe not. Trump, likewise, has ignored calls and faxes to his office from Tim Whitcomb, a Reformer who seeks to draft the millionaire. But this hasn't stopped Whitcomb, who's declared himself a "cochairman of Trump 2000" and has been distributing flyers in Trump's name. The rump Trump committee even rents a "hospitality suite" for Friday night, and rumor spreads that The Donald is coming. But all that's in the suite are several plastic bowls of peanuts and pretzels, a few gallon jugs of Inglenook wine, and some disappointed delegates.

Trump isn't the only celebrity with unauthorized supporters here. One woman from New Jersey collects signatures to draft Ralph Nader (she has ten when I meet her), and another woman is drafting Buchanan (she has four). Ted Turner has some fans here, as does former Oklahoma Senator David Boren. Boren's booster, Oklahoma Reform Party Chairman Greg Brown, grabs me in a headlock and puts his hands around my neck, urging me to "see the light." He allows me to leave after I accept an autographed copy of a Boren endorsement he wrote for *The Norman Transcript*. Nearby is a booth to draft Colin Powell. "We're going to get a million signatures," says Drake Beadle, the man at the table. How many so far? "Just these," he says, showing me 16 names. The next day, the Powell contingent hosts a press conference. "Many of you have asked me why we would do this, since he has said he would not run," the self-appointed chairwoman begins, and it goes downhill from there. Any pipe dream, it seems, is possible. "Why *not* have a ticket of Jesse Jackson and Pat Buchanan?" asks Robert Bowman, who, like a dozen or so convention participants, is running for president himself. (In his candidacy statement, he identifies himself as "Most Rev. Dr. Robert M. Bowman, Lt. Col. USAF, ret.")

Actually, Buchanan, however zany his views may be, is probably the Reformers' best fit. He appeals to the Reagan Democrats alienated by their party's free trading and to the religious conservatives alienated by Republican front-runner George W. Bush. The party needs a big name to keep its public money for 2004, when Ventura might run. "If we don't have a five percent vote in 2000, the money's gone and the party's over," says Whitcomb, the unrequited Trump admirer.

There is, to be sure, something noble about the Reform Party gathering, with its clear message of power to the people. If only the people weren't demanding quite so much power. Everybody in the Dearborn Hyatt, it seems, is running for something; every man is a would-be governor, senator, or president. Their campaigns are all the more perplexing because none of them actually wins. One fellow hands me a card with a smiley face announcing "Wierzba Wierzba '99," a husband-and-wife team running for mayor and borough council in their New Jersey town. A man from Florida running for Senate distributes photos of himself with President Reagan. Walking out of one session, I am approached by a Minnesota Senate candidate, then approached again a few feet away by a man who just ran for governor of Ohio. He stands with a beer-bellied friend, and I ask if the friend is running, too. "No," he replies. "I'm a kingmaker."

The amateur quality gives the convention the feel of a col-

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lege government meeting, right down to the "cash and carry" lunch. As the convention begins Friday night, two men walk into the display hall with what looks like an enormous dead bird but turns out to be the party mascot, an eagle. Its wings, packed in a separate cardboard box, have yet to be assembled, and the stand has yet to arrive, so the bird carcass is left belly-up on the exhibition room floor while TV cameras film it. It seems an apt metaphor for the party's bush-league feel. Pat Benjamin, running for party chairman, distributes pamphlets stating that she's "got the resources" for the job, because she had a second phone line installed in her home and "she also bought two more computers." On Saturday morning, the convention erupts into a bitter floor fight between two groups both claiming to be the New Jersey Reform Party.

The convention's finest moment comes neither from such antics nor from Perot's address but from the speech of an 89-year-old campaign finance reformer known as "Granny D." At the podium Friday night, she stokes the true, populist themes that unite the otherwise divided party. "Democracy is something we do not have because we cannot speak," she preaches. "We are shouted down by the bullhorns of big money." Granny D compares Michael Eisner to Khrushchev and Tito as the crowd erupts. The devotion to campaign finance reform is the party's noblest trait, and yet the party only exists because of Perot's millions; the only reason it remains relevant is the $12.6 million it has for 2000. Though the speakers, one after the other, attack the establishment attitudes of the other two parties, the Reform Party itself looks similar. An upstart member, Jack Gargan, backed by an upstart patron, Ventura, is running for party chairman against the establishment favorite, Benjamin, backed by the party's founder, Perot. It's little different from the Bradley vs. Gore or the everybody vs. Bush struggles. Gargan, in a press conference, accuses the party establishment of shutting him out by refusing to give him a full list of delegates.

The party chairman contest is crucial. If Gargan wins, Ventura is free to recruit a big-name candidate; if Benjamin wins, Perot will likely choose the candidate—namely, himself. Perot, on Saturday night, delivers a typical stump speech, saying he's willing "to participate in any constructive way." I doubt that means licking envelopes.

In the end, though, there's a refreshing difference between the Reformers and the Democrats and Republicans: the Reform Party, true to its roots, elects outsider Gargan over insider Benjamin. Alas, the new party chairman is not exactly free of the "crazy aunt" problem. A retired financial planner and unsuccessful congressional candidate, he lives, as *The Washington Post* reports, on Florida's Cedar Key because it will be safer during the depression and anarchy he's expecting. "You've got to come twenty-four miles down that road to get here," Gargan has said. "You could defend the number four bridge and only let in friends and relatives, or no one at all."

But Gargan himself isn't important. What matters is that Perot's stranglehold on the party has been broken, and that bodes well for its chances of finding a serious candidate in 2000. Still, Gargan will carry on at least part of the Perot legacy. The new chairman, I notice at Gargan's press conference, has enormous ears. ■

Barak unveils his plan for peace.

On Board

By Robert Satloff

The Arab-Israeli peace process is, to use the metaphor of choice, "back on track." That, at least, is the stylized version of the message Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak brought with him to Washington in mid-July. The reality, of course, is more complicated. And, for the Clinton administration, Barak's real message was calming, unnerving, and startling—all at the same time.

For a president with an eye toward history, the welcome part was Barak's decision to make the peace process his top priority; he promised, with characteristic modesty, to "end the Arab-Israeli conflict." On the tactical front, the administration was also pleased that Barak was cagey enough to affirm the dual-track approach of pursuing peace with both Syria and the Palestinians simultaneously, all the while signaling his clear interest in a speedy (i.e., six-to-eight-month) real estate transaction with Damascus in contrast to the messy, time-consuming divorce settlement with the Palestinians. And, despite some grumbling about Barak's all too public pre-arrival criticism of the CIA's role in supervising the minutiae of Palestinian compliance with the Wye memorandum, the administration actually endorses his preference to turn back the clock to the pre-Netanyahu formula, in which Washington was the indispensable interlocutor with Syria but only a supporting actor in the Palestinian drama. Indeed, Clinton has done little to dispel rumors that he would serve as his own "special envoy" to clinch a peace deal with Hafez al-Assad. Hence the White House's disappointment that the Syrian leader passed up this week's funeral for Morocco's King Hassan II, denying Clinton a chance to orchestrate a second "historic handshake" between an Israeli prime minister and a legendary Arab adversary.

But, if Barak's infectious enthusiasm for the peace process buoyed the hopes of his American hosts by conjuring up images of one, two, or perhaps even three more White House signing ceremonies before the November 2000 election, the details of his negotiating posture were, to some policymakers, unsettling.

Barak reminded Washington that he does not like the way the Israeli-Palestinian peace process has developed. Ever since Barak, then the Israel Defense Forces' chief of staff, was denied any role in the secret negotiation of the original Oslo accords in 1993, he has criticized a process by which Israel withdraws from incremental slices of West Bank territory without a clear idea of the final line of withdrawal, the nature

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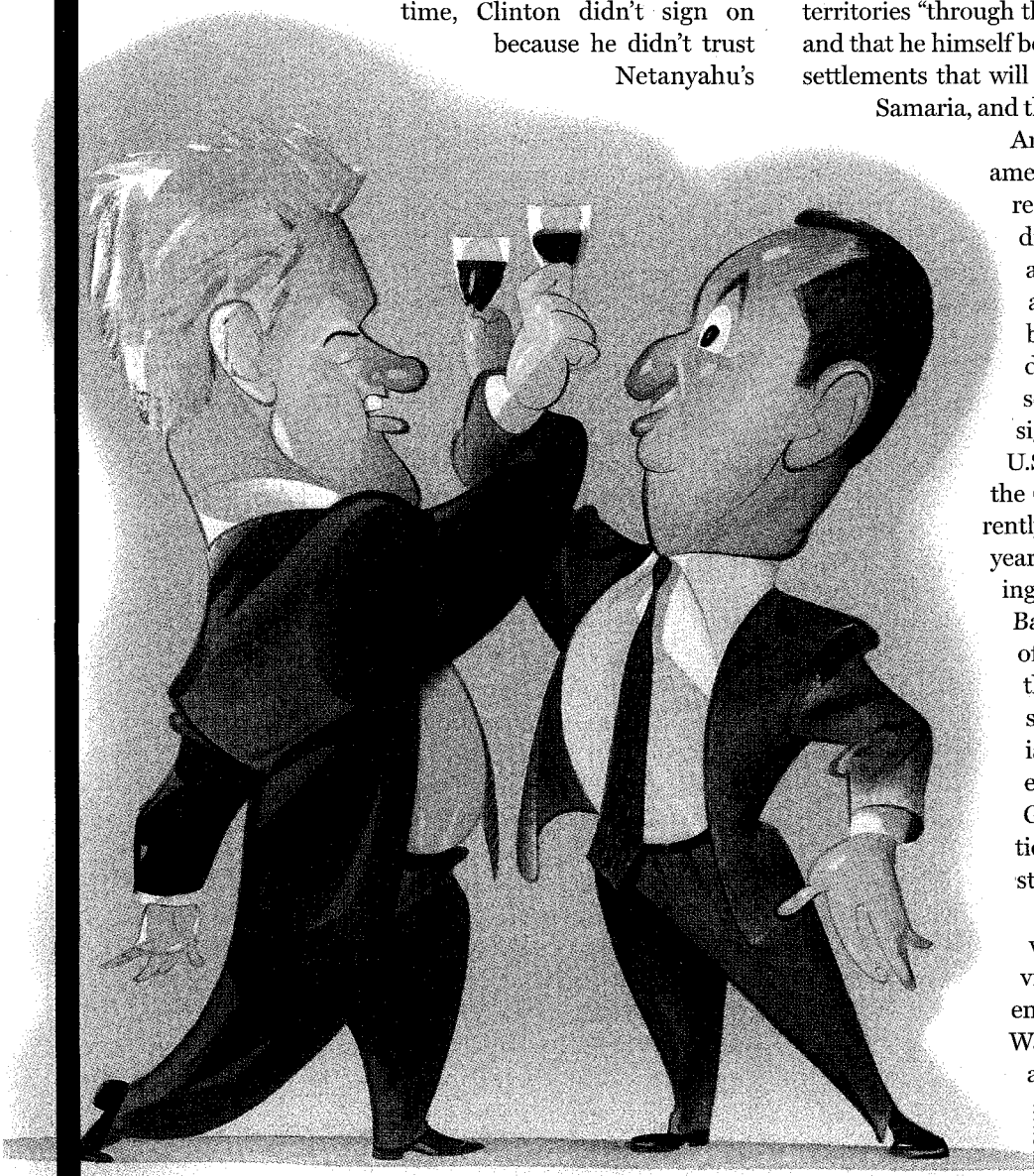
of the Palestinian entity that will emerge on the ceded land, or the ultimate relationship between that entity and Israel. While recognizing that a tentative, incremental approach may have been necessary in 1993 as the first step toward peace, Barak thought it folly to maintain that strategy in subsequent agreements. As a result, when the Oslo II accord was brought before the Israeli Cabinet in September 1995, then-Interior Minister Barak abstained.

Last year's Wye memorandum raised incrementalism to new heights. One of its principal features was to divide the first two of the three Israeli-promised "further redeployments" envisioned in Oslo II into three slivers of withdrawal, each of which would be linked to a series of Palestinian actions designed to fulfill obligations outstanding from previous agreements. Not surprisingly, Barak thoroughly disliked Wye and wanted a way out. His proposed solution was to fulfill the first two redeployments and then fold discussions about later withdrawals into a comprehensive negotiation on a "declaration of principles" for a final resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Clinton listened politely, as he had when Netanyahu made a similar pitch about junking incrementalism in February 1997. At that time, Clinton didn't sign on because he didn't trust Netanyahu's bona fides. This time, Clinton didn't doubt Barak's sincerity, but he was hamstrung by his commitment to the language of the Wye accords and to his growing relationship with Arafat. Wye, after all, was a deal Israel made with Arafat (and, one shouldn't forget, Clinton's own personal achievement). Any change in Wye, Clinton reportedly reminded Barak, would have to meet with Arafat's approval.

Also unsettling was the realization that, while Barak may be more serious than Netanyahu about reaching peace with the Arabs, he's not much more willing to compromise on specific items on the negotiating agenda than his predecessor was. His four "no"s on the Palestinian track—no return to the 1967 borders, no uprooting of Israeli settlements, no division of "united Jerusalem," and no modern Arab army west of the Jordan river—are consensus principles inside Israel that Ariel Sharon's Likud Party would also support. Indeed, on perhaps the most emotive issue for Palestinians—Jewish settlement in the West Bank—Barak has so far shown himself far more sympathetic to settlers than was his mentor, the slain Yitzhak Rabin. Just days after Clinton slammed Israel's "destructive settlement policy," Barak, standing in the Rose Garden, reminded his host that almost all settlers came to the territories "through the approval of the Israeli government" and that he himself believes in maintaining a "strong bloc of settlements that will include most of the settlers in Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip."



ERIC PALMA

And, vis-à-vis Syria, Barak may prove amenable to much of Assad's territorial requirement—perhaps accepting a withdrawal to the 1923 international boundary, modified in spots to give Assad the appearance of additional concessions—but he has hinted that he will be more demanding than expected on Israel's security requirements. One important sign was Barak's announcement that U.S. troops would not be needed to police the Golan Heights the way 1,000 GIs currently patrol the Sinai desert more than 20 years after the Egypt-Israel peace. By taking the issue of U.S. troops off the table, Barak not only defused potential critics of a Syria-Israel peace, he also signaled that Israel would demand more extensive Syrian demilitarization, deeper Syrian force limitation zones, and perhaps even a continued Israeli presence in the Golan to monitor early warning installations as compensation for returning the strategic plateau to Syrian sovereignty.

Perhaps most startling about Barak's visit was the sheer enormousness of his vision. Barak thinks big. In addition to ending the Arab-Israeli conflict, Barak's Washington agenda addressed questions as diverse as how to redesign the Israel Defense Forces (build a smaller, smarter army), how to solve the Palestinian refugee problem

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(resettle most in host countries), and how to fix the Middle East water shortage (invest heavily in desalination plants). Privately, Israeli officials even explored whether U.S. generosity would extend, in the context of peace, to direct financial assistance for Syria. With ingenuity, will, and tens of billions of U.S. dollars—now miraculously available, thanks to budget surpluses—no problem seemed impervious to solution.

DETERMINED TO CONSIGN the Netanyahu interlude to history, the Clinton administration provided Barak with the warmest reception any newly elected Israeli premier has ever received in Washington. On a personal level, Barak was feted in a movable feast that included a gala soiree at the White House, an intimate dinner at Camp David, a buffet lunch at Al Gore's Observatory Hill residence, and a breakfast at Madeleine Albright's Georgetown townhouse. Politically, the administration came up with money for Israel's Arrow anti-missile missile program just three months after informing Netanyahu's defense minister that the cupboard looked bare and, just three months after telling Arafat that Washington supported a twelve-month "target" for a "final status agreement" on the future of the West Bank and Gaza, promised Barak that America would never set negotiating deadlines.

Accompanied by less fanfare, but perhaps of greater significance, was a decision by the administration to broaden the "strategic partnership" between the United States and Israel. In a joint communiqué remarkable for its focus on what Washington can do to assist Israel—a throwback to the days before the emergence of the concept of "strategic cooperation," when the two sides tended to emphasize joint efforts to meet common threats—Clinton committed the United States to "strengthen[ing] Israel's ability to deter and defend itself, by itself, against any threat or a possible combination of threats" and to "bolster[ing] Israel's indigenous defense and deterrent capabilities." These words, which underscore the role of Israel's homemade, unspoken-of deterrent and lack the qualifiers of past declarations, almost certainly will catch the attention of strategists from Cairo to Tehran.

In compensating Barak in strategic coin for his pursuit of peace diplomacy, Clinton has, in fact, reverted to the formula that worked so well with Rabin. On some aspects of the peace process, however, turning back the clock will not be so easy. And, on other aspects, reliving the 1993–96 experience would only invite further disappointment.

Barak may want the United States to stop playing "policeman, judge, and arbitrator" of Israeli-Palestinian relations, returning to the "facilitator" role Washington fulfilled under Rabin, but, without Arafat's approval, neither Barak nor Clinton can escape the fact that America is bound under the Wye accords to play all three roles. So far, Arafat has shown no inclination to release Washington from its contractual obligations. In a twist of historic irony, Arafat's Cabinet declared last week that "the American role [is] vital to ensure the success of complex negotiations." That is because Arafat knows that the closer the parties move toward addressing the "final status" agenda—Jerusalem, settlements, borders, refugees, and the question of Palestinian statehood—the more likely it is that Washington's traditional legalistic positions, which are closer to the Palestinians' on each of these issues, will clash with the administration's political affinity for Barak.

Conversely, other aspects of the U.S. role during the Rabin era of peacemaking are best left in the past. It was during those halcyon days that the United States accepted Israel's argument that it was wise to turn a blind eye to the growing authoritarianism of the Palestinian Authority, preferring not to press Arafat too far too fast lest the radical Hamas gain strength, and that it was best not to look too closely at Palestinian compliance with Oslo requirements lest Arafat's status as a legitimate peace partner come under scrutiny. In retrospect, Washington always had greater freedom than Israel to demand both democracy and security from the PA, and, as we now know, Arafat has always been strong enough relative to all competitors that he could have delivered more on both counts.

IN TRYING TO advance both peace between Syria and Israel and U.S. regional interests, a replay of the 1993–96 experience does not seem to be a hopeful prospect either. That was the period when Clinton, ever mindful of Assad's sensibilities, stood silently on the dais in Damascus as the Syrian leader asked a roomful of reporters whether anyone could cite a single act of Syrian-inspired terrorism and when the White House touted a "mechanism" for addressing Syrian support of terrorism that convened once and was never heard from again. While U.S. officials, especially then-Secretary of State Warren Christopher, bravely bared themselves to ridicule in order to fulfill the diplomat's task of shuttling between Rabin and Assad, a U.S. miscommunication of Rabin's hypothetical proposal regarding withdrawal from the Golan lies at the heart of the Syria-Israel dispute over where their talks actually left off. And never, during this period or since, has the United States articulated a vision of how Syria-Israel peace—which some in both Israel and Washington expect to be liberally greased with U.S. economic assistance—will, as a matter of course, advance related U.S. interests, such as the severing of the Syria-Iran strategic relationship, the withdrawal of the Syrian army from Lebanon, or the opening of Syria's closed society.

Today, Clinton and Barak stand ready to board a train that will reach its destination only if the two are in sync in terms of both tactics and strategy. Barak's ten hours of talks with Clinton narrowed gaps, but differences persist. Yet the two leaders have strong motives to reach agreements far in advance of Barak's stated 15-month target date—Clinton in order to earn the mantle of peacemaker before plunging into his wife's and his vice president's election campaigns; Barak to fulfill his own campaign promise to quit Lebanon by next summer and to exploit his standing in Washington before his broad-based, secular-to-religious coalition begins to fray at home.

In the end, the principal obstacle to peace treaties with Syria and the Palestinians is likely to be the reluctance of aging leaders in Gaza and Damascus to break with decades of precedents and make the compromises necessary for peace to happen. Together, Clinton and Barak are sure to find a way to fire up the engine of the Arab-Israeli peace train, but it's still up to Assad and Arafat to hop aboard. ■

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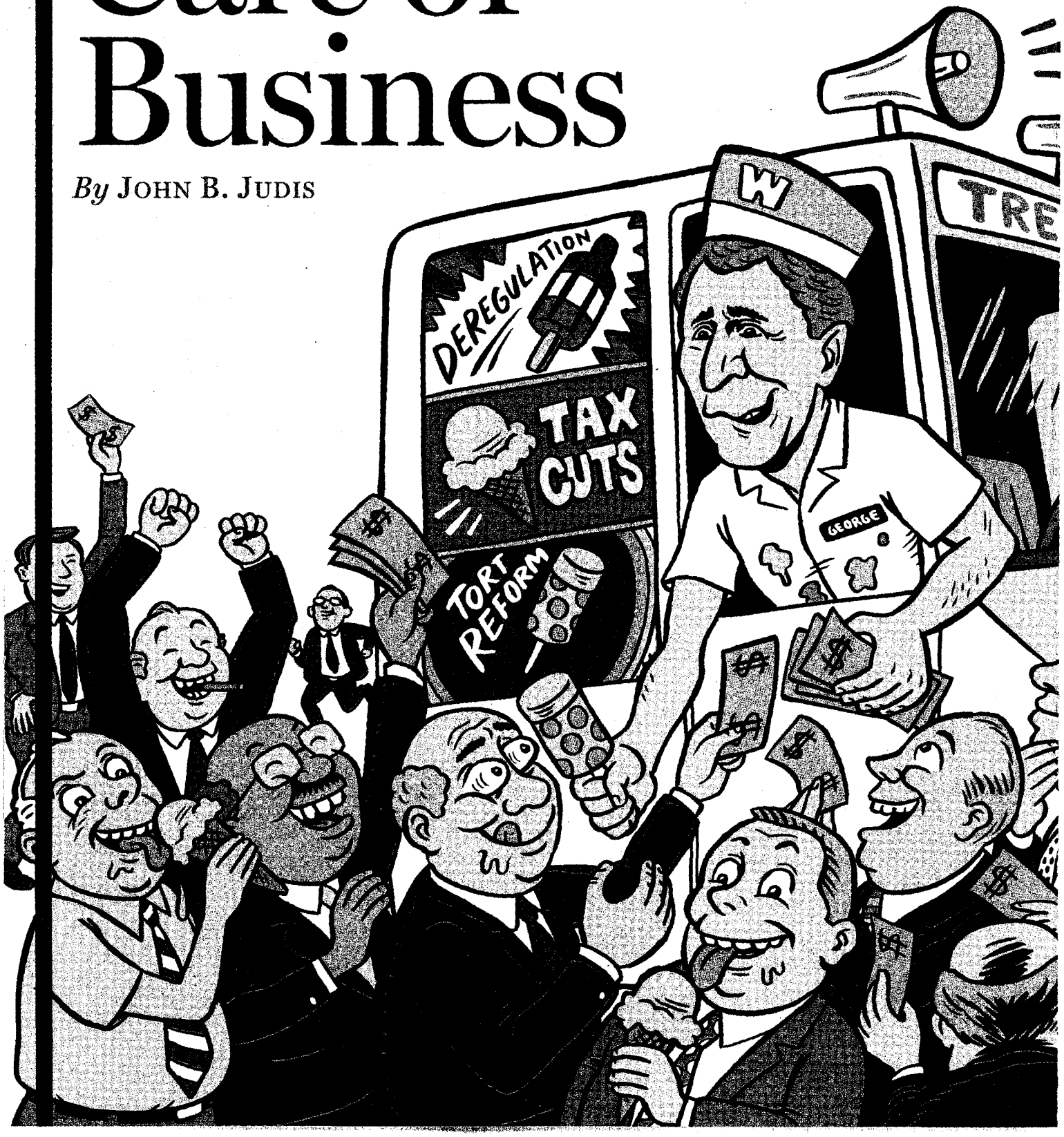
George W. Bush's Compassion for Corporations

Taking Care of Business

By JOHN B. JUDIS



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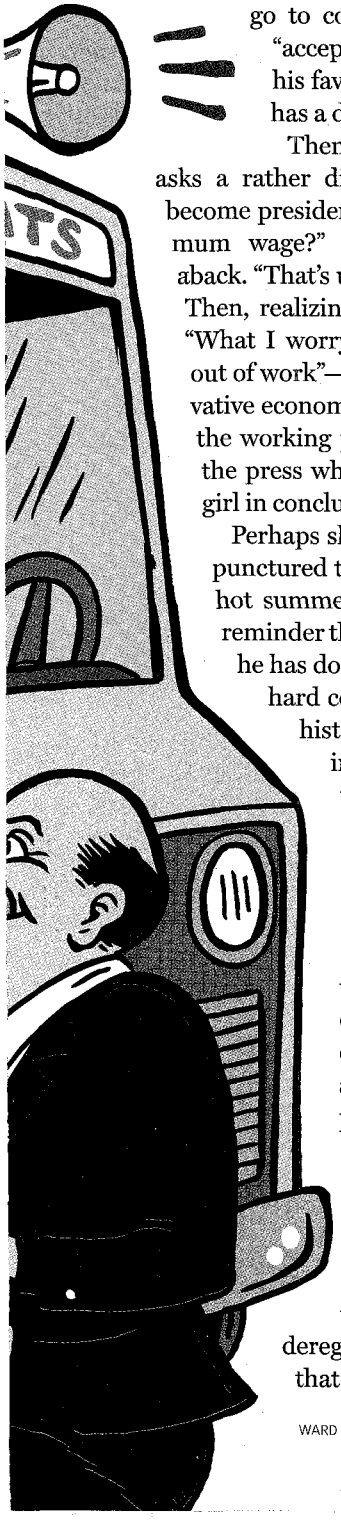
GEORGE W. BUSH, governor of Texas and candidate for president of the United States, is perched on a red plastic chair in front of about 30 elementary-school-age black children in a large playroom. Plastered on the walls are signs proclaiming "JESUS SAVES" and "GOD IS THE WORD." The children are part of a Christian summer program for poverty-stricken kids called The Door, located in East Baltimore, a high-unemployment area whose streets are lined with boarded-up row houses. The reporters following Bush stand in a roped-off area at the back of the room, barred from asking the candidate questions. Instead, Bush is fielding queries from the kids. What college did you go to? the children want to know. What is your faith? What are your hobbies? Do you have any pets? In response, Bush warns the children that if they use drugs they won't go to college. He tells them that he has "accepted Jesus Christ as my savior," that his favorite hobby is reading, and that he has a dog named Spot.



Then a little girl raises her hand and asks a rather different sort of question: "If you become president, are you going to raise the minimum wage?" Bush seems momentarily taken aback. "That's up to Congress," he tells her at first. Then, realizing that won't quite work, he adds, "What I worry about, though, is pricing people out of work"—an oft-repeated concern of conservative economists that is generally not shared by the working poor. "You should be a member of the press when you grow up," he tells the little girl in conclusion.

Perhaps she should be, because her question punctured the Pat-the-Bunny unreality of that hot summer afternoon. Bush's answer was a reminder that, behind the mask of compassion he has donned for this campaign, he is a die-hard conservative on the issues that have historically been among the most important to American voters—those that pit the interests of business against those of ordinary people in their roles as workers and consumers. This is apparent in his record as governor of Texas: for five years, he has consistently sided with the state's largest manufacturers, as well as with its oil, gas, and construction companies. And it is apparent in the barely veiled class politics of his campaign: while he has made occasional sound-bite excursions to places like The Door, he and his top fund-raisers have clearly signaled to his business supporters that, if he is elected, he will carry forward the agenda of deregulation, tax cuts, and tort reform that the Republicans, together with Washington's business lobbyists, have championed since the early '80s.

WARD SUTTON

Some reporters who have visited Austin have missed this conservative side of Bush's politics. They have been misled by his commitment to spending on education and by his opposition to California's Proposition 187, which stigmatized illegal immigrants. Both stands were applauded by liberal Democrats. But, for Bush, they reflected the priorities of Texas's large companies, which have been concerned about the quality of the state's labor force and the availability of new workers, including those from across the border. The press has also been misled by Bush's lack of a strong theoretical or ideological foundation for his economic views, which they mistake for evidence of his moderate pragmatism. While it's true that Bush's economic views are reflexive rather than reflective, all his reflexes are conservative. They consist in his looking to the welfare of business first and heeding the advice and wishes of business leaders. This impulse has shown itself every time Texas's businesses have clashed directly with workers or consumers. In these cases, Bush did not take the centrist and pluralist path of trying to accommodate both sides; he threw his weight squarely behind the power of business.

PERHAPS THE BEST example of the true nature of Bush's conservatism is his record on tort reform. Started in the early '80s, the tort reform movement was led by the American Tort Reform Association, the Product Liability Coordinating Committee, and the Civil Justice Reform Group, which were funded primarily by oil, chemical, automobile, pharmaceutical, tobacco, and insurance companies. It was also backed by the National Association of Manufacturers, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and conservative think tanks and policy groups. The movement was a response to a genuine problem in business law, but its particular approach was extraordinarily one-sided.

Tort law covers such matters as medical malpractice, product liability, personal injury, and auto accidents. Over the past three decades, court decisions have called attention to dangerous flaws in such products as the Ford Pinto and the Dalkon Shield, and punitive damages have led companies to change their ways and induced the government to adopt new regulations. But tort law has also become a tangled web of inconsistent state laws whose enforcement has largely depended on highly subjective judgments by juries and, sometimes, on the antics of irresponsible lawyers. So there is a good case to be made for creating uniform national standards and shifting some tort conflicts—for instance, those over the safety of vaccines—onto regulatory agencies that would have the power to penalize malefactors and reward victims while concentrating on preventing rather than punishing abuses. This could also result in lower premiums on lawsuit insurance if these initiatives were combined with legislation repealing the insurance industry's 1945 exemption from federal antitrust regulation—an exemption that has allowed companies to raise rates in concert.

But the aim of the tort movement was never genuine reform, which implies an acceptance of democratic pluralism. Instead, while railing against trial lawyers, it sought to

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prevent consumers and workers from winning large settlements against businesses. Businesses lobbied, among other things, to limit the size of damage awards (which would allow companies more easily to calculate the benefits against the foreseeable costs of producing a flawed or dangerous product), to set lower limits on the contingency fees that plaintiff's lawyers can collect if they win (which makes it harder for lower-income consumers to hire lawyers), and to raise the bar in liability suits by requiring plaintiffs to demonstrate not merely negligence but also malice.

The companies didn't want to shift tort conflicts onto regulatory agencies. On the contrary, the same corporations and their trade associations favored *weakening* consumer, labor, and environmental regulatory agencies. Nor did the tort reformers, which included insurance companies, favor removing the insurance industry's antitrust exemption. The misleadingly labeled tort reform movement was part of business's attempt to strengthen its hand at the expense of workers and consumers.

When Congress failed to pass the tort reform agenda during the Reagan years, lobbyists began to focus on the states, and Texas became a key battleground. In 1986, Exxon, Shell, Mobil, Dow, Halliburton, Otis Engineering, and other large corporations founded the Texas Civil Justice League. In 1989, under Republican Governor William Clements, the lobby helped achieve legislation that made it more difficult for employees to win workers' compensation claims. In 1994, a group of oil, gas, and construction company executives founded Texans for Lawsuit Reform and, along with the Texas Civil Justice League, mounted a campaign to cap punitive damages, force plaintiffs to file suits where a company is headquartered rather than where particular injuries occurred, and make it harder for plaintiffs to collect full damages in cases where more than one party was responsible for an injury or accident.

When Bush ran for governor that year, the business officials from these lobbies were among his principal funders, and he made passing their agenda his first priority. In October 1994, he said, "Probably the most significant thing that I will do when I am governor of this state is to insist that Texas change the tort laws and insist that we end the frivolous and junk lawsuits that threaten our producers and crowd our courts." Immediately after assuming office, he declared tort reform an "emergency issue," which meant that the legislature could take action within the first 30 days of his administration. Bush and the lobbies then got the legislature to pass the business agenda.

Bush promised that the new tort reform legislation would

A Measure of Compassion

IT IS EASY to mock George W. Bush's call for a "compassionate conservatism." The serious question, though, is whether Bush can weave together conservative principles and compassion to form a coherent and compelling governing philosophy. Leading Democrats seem certain that the answer is no.

One school of Democratic thought, exemplified by journalist Mickey Kaus, holds that a national campaign based on compassion is a surefire loser. Compassion, Kaus argued recently in *The New York Times*, condescends to those to whom it is offered, refuses to draw distinctions between the deserving and the undeserving poor, and bases social programs on a fragile, fickle impulse. Let the Republicans keep compassion, Kaus concluded, and let the Democrats be the party that justifies activist government as the expression of "proud, free working citizens."

The other Democratic camp, represented by former New York Governor Mario Cuomo, believes that compassion is the core value of Democrats, not Republicans. "Governor Bush's description of compassion," Cuomo wrote in the *Times* shortly after Kaus, "will do more for the Democrats' case than it could possibly do for his own." Cuomo reasoned that Bush's promise to help the sick and the elderly, struggling families, and poor children is bound to ring hollow with Bush's core constituency but will resonate powerfully with Vice President Al Gore's agenda and audience.

Though each raises a serious doubt about compassionate conservatism, both Kaus and Cuomo may be selling it short. Kaus, in describing compassion as condescending, undiscriminating, and fragile, mistakes the pitfalls and perversions of compassion for the real thing. Moreover, his advice to Democrats to argue for the strengthening of social programs only by appealing to the self-interest of proud, free workers is itself condescending, treating the ill and the impoverished as if they were proud and free. Compassion is easily abused but often necessary and appropriate. A wise compassion invites us to treat individuals in great need as capable of becoming proud and free and worthy of concern even if they are not.

Cuomo belittles compassionate conservatism because he believes that "the two ideas it links aren't a good marriage." Indeed, the match may be neither obvious nor a case of love at first sight. But, in purporting to discern an insuperable opposition between compassion and conservatism, Cuomo rudely and shortsightedly denies his opponents access to a basic human quality. He also forgets that, while like may flourish with like, it is also true that opposites can not only attract but also complement.

When it comes to compassion, Bush, in some ways, has an advantage over Democrats. Unlike Kaus, who, burned by past Democratic excesses and apparently still smarting, would now fly to the other extreme and altogether eliminate compassion from politics, Bush, who has cut taxes and reformed welfare in Texas, can afford to give compassion its due because he has proved his commitment to restraint and discipline in government. And, in contrast to Cuomo, who (like the McGovern-era Democrats Kaus mocks) puts compassion at the core of politics, Bush presents compassion as a modifier to his conservatism, not as its essence.

To be sure, the campaign so far has not yet demonstrated how serious Bush is about his compassion—or whether he will be able to honor his conservative principles while advancing the

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not only curb lawsuits but would also reduce insurance rates, as insurance companies passed their savings in claims and suits on to consumers in the form of lower premiums. But it did nothing of the kind. The legislation did curb lawsuits, which dropped by 10,000 each year from 1995 to 1998. But insurance companies cynically raised their rates while making windfall profits off the drop in claims. For instance, according to D.J. Powers, former general counsel for the Texas Department of Insurance, auto insurers netted an unprecedented $3 billion in the three years after the law passed. Insurance companies and other firms in the Texas Civil Justice League and Texans for Lawsuit Reform were duly appreciative and rewarded Bush for his support. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, Bush received $4.5 million in his two gubernatorial races from businesses connected with the two groups.

BUSH HAS ALSO taken the side of business on major environmental issues—most notably in a key battle over the Texas Clean Air Act. Collectively, Texas's cities suffer from the worst air pollution in the country. The Environmental Protection Agency is currently threatening both Dallas and Houston with sanctions for failing to comply with federal standards, and sanctions against Beaumont and El Paso may soon follow. But Bush, heeding the wishes of the state's leading industries, thwarted an attempt to remedy the situation. He blocked the correction of a problematic provision in the state's 1971 Clean Air Act that exempts older plants from complying with the law's regulations. The original reasoning behind the exemption was that the old plants would soon be replaced by newer, more efficient ones. But, faced with the costs of compliance, many of the affected industries decided to stick with the older plants.

Twenty-five years later, more than 800 of these sites remained, and they were creating more than a third of Texas's industrial air pollution. Removing their exemption would have cut air pollution substantially. In meetings with industry representatives in the winter of 1997, the state's Natural Resource Conservation Commission informed representatives of the oil, gas, chemical, and utilities industries that the commission planned to recommend the removal of the exemption. At this point, Bush and Environmental Director John Howard took action. What subsequently happened was revealed in government documents obtained by the Texas Fund for Energy and Environmental Education.

At Bush's behest, Howard began meeting with representatives from Exxon and Marathon Oil to draw up a proposal

cause of the most vulnerable among us. But, in his early formulations of the theory—particularly during his June 12 speech in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, in which he declared himself a candidate for president and spoke of the "purpose of prosperity"—Bush has indicated a distinctly conservative way to bring compassion into politics. For Bush, the aim is not to create a compassionate government but for government to maintain the conditions under which individuals and communities can care for themselves and for others. This requires that government be used sparingly, though energetically, to promote the idea of personal responsibility; to nourish the continued involvement of nongovernmental associations, religious organizations, and secular charities in bringing relief to drug addicts, prisoners, and unwed mothers and their children; and to support high standards in quality education made available to all children.

Indeed, as Bush has explained it, compassionate conservatism appears to be an attempt to reconcile the conflicting impulses rooted in the nature of any liberal democracy. After all, our politics depend upon a complex mix of self-interest, or what we want for ourselves; justice, by which we usually mean what is owed others according to the law; and the presently disputed compassion, which can be defined as sympathy for those who suffer accompanied by the desire to help alleviate their condition.

In a free, sprawling, pluralist democracy like ours, self-interest will always be the primary political motivation of the majority of citizens. In such a democracy, justice can be effective in no small measure because citizens can reasonably come to believe that it is in their interest to uphold a system in which each person is treated as equal before the law. And compassion, though generally less powerful than self-interest and often less dignified than justice, though easily distracted and easily corrupted, lives as a vital sentiment within the hearts of many citizens, who refuse to allow their relations to others to be defined exclusively by the imperatives of self-interest and the formal principles enshrined in law.

The problem is that self-interest, justice, and compassion have an awkward habit of pointing in divergent directions and confusing us with conflicting demands. The challenge of democratic self-government today—a perennial challenge for democracies based on the freedom and equality of all—is to craft an account of government and citizenship that, to the extent possible, gives self-interest, justice, and compassion each its due. The party that understands this with greatest clarity and conveys it to voters in the most compelling manner will enjoy a huge advantage come November 2000.

In his 1992 presidential campaign, Bill Clinton spoke frequently of the importance of personal responsibility, family, and community, and he directed his appeal to those who "work hard and play by the rules." In doing so, he was lifting a page from Ronald Reagan's playbook. Republicans cried foul, but Clinton was certainly playing not only skillfully but also fairly. He found a way to talk in a Democratic register about concerns that were not appropriately the exclusive monopoly of the right but the common property of all thoughtful citizens.

Now Bush seems to have learned something from Democrats and the left. Instead of smugly forecasting his inevitable demise, Democrats might do well to contemplate more carefully the causes of his early success.

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that merely encouraged, rather than required, the old plants to comply with the 1971 standards. In June 1997, the three of them met with about two dozen industry representatives to report on their proposal. Later in the year, the Natural Resource Conservation Commission adopted this proposal as its own. Then, at the beginning of this year, an oil industry lobbyist drafted a bill based on the proposal, and a Republican state senator introduced it. The bill was hotly debated—Democrats tried to make compliance mandatory—but it got through the legislature largely intact and was signed by Bush.

As was the case with tort reform, Bush was amply rewarded for his efforts. As governor and as candidate for governor, Bush received $566,098 in contributions from companies that would have been affected by the exemption's removal. And his environmental position has also benefited his presidential campaign. While the Texas legislature was debating the clean air bill this winter, a state law prohibited the potentially affected industries from contributing to Bush in his capacity as governor, but the companies got around that by donating more than $300,000 to Bush's presidential campaign war chest. (By July, the *Los Angeles Times* reports, donors from these companies had given $1.5 million.)

Bush's performance on environmental issues puts him in line with House Republicans like Tom DeLay rather than his fellow Republican governors, some of whom, such as New York Governor George Pataki, have been sympathetic to public concerns about air and water pollution. And environmental protection and tort reform are hardly the only issues on which Bush has displayed such favoritism toward business. For instance, he has ignored the tradition, dating back to World War I and followed today by many Republican as well as Democratic officials, of populating boards and commissions that address workers' problems with representatives of labor as well as of business and government.

In 1995, the Texas legislature established an eleven-member board to set academic and occupational standards that would guide community colleges in preparing their students for technical and blue-collar jobs. By law, the board was supposed to include "seven members who represent business" and "two members who represent labor." Customarily, the labor members would have been drawn from the leadership of organized labor. Instead, Bush filled the first slot with the vice president of nursing services at a large hospital who *managed* 700 employees and filled the second with a part-time computer programmer and accountant employed by her husband's law firm. Bush made a similarly outrageous appointment to the commission that oversees workers' compensation. By themselves, these appointments were not earthshaking events, but they displayed a contempt for pluralism and for the theory of political balance among business, labor, and consumers that has been embraced by Republicans such as Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge and Illinois Governor George Ryan, as well as by Democratic officials.

Bush, of course, has sometimes had to side with one industry against another. He annoyed the state's electrical utilities by forcing down rates but pleased their industrial customers. And, while he is a conservative, he is not a Cato Institute-style free-market ideologue. Thus he has also occasionally accepted defeat when the public stood united against him. In 1997, for example, after he was unable to get the Texas legislature to block a bill permitting consumers to sue health maintenance organizations for malpractice, he allowed it to become law without signing it. He is, in short, a politician who knows that he must occasionally compromise in order to maintain a position from which he can advance most, if not all, of his agenda. Still, when it comes to business issues, that agenda puts him solidly to the right of most other Republican governors.

Bush's pro-business agenda is already evident in his nascent campaign. So far, he has spent most of his time wooing business contributors in large fund-raising gatherings. At fund-raisers in Washington on June 22 and in Baltimore on July 14, he gave exactly the same pitch, give or take a few local references—moving seamlessly from compassion and morality into corporate conservatism, from "[o]ur country must be prosperous, but prosperity must have a purpose" to "the role of government is to create an environment in which we'll be prosperous." Government, he declared, should "cut marginal tax rates," get rid of "regulations that are strangling enterprises," enact "real, meaningful, long-lasting tort reform," and "embrace free trade." Tort reform and free trade got the most prolonged applause in both cities.

Bush is more the candidate of large multinational corporations and banks than of small, nonexport businesses or small-time investors on E*Trade. When he talks about free trade, he really means unfettered foreign investment. He can be just as breezy as his father about China's performance on trade and human rights. "I believe that free trade with China will help develop the entrepreneurial class in China. I subscribe to the theory that free markets can yield freedom." Bush rarely mentions capital gains rates—a favorite of the small investor. He wants to cut marginal tax rates for corporations and individuals and to create a new tax credit for research and development. Bush's two potential Democratic rivals, Vice President Al Gore and former Senator Bill Bradley, share Bush's position on China and have favored tax credits for investment. But they are both centrists who want to balance the interests of business with those of workers and consumers. Bush's agenda—epitomized by the combination of tort reform and deregulation—is to enhance the power of business over workers and consumers. It is the agenda of the National Association of Manufacturers and the Business Roundtable.

During his campaign, Bush has avoided taking detailed positions on economic issues, including his proposal for a tax cut. That is partly the result of understandable caution, but it also reflects the fact that, on economic policy as well as foreign policy, he has not thought through his positions. That may be why Bush could appear taken aback by a little girl's question about the minimum wage—an issue that has been around for 60 years and that was debated in Congress as recently as three years ago. Much of what Bush will say and do will, therefore, depend on what his advisers tell him about specific programs and policies.

It is thus significant that Bush has picked advisers who share his corporate, conservative inclinations. Bush's top

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adviser is former Federal Reserve Governor Larry Lindsey. Lindsey was appointed to the Fed by George W.'s father and is now a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, the think tank of the Fortune 500. Like George W., Lindsey is not concerned with capital gains rates or a flat tax but with lower corporate and individual marginal tax rates. "There are other rates [than capital gains] which are higher and more distorting to the economy," he told me. He rejects the supply-side nostrum—popular among Steve Forbes's backers—that capital should not be taxed at all. "If you tax labor, you ought to tax capital," he explained.

Yet Lindsey's economic views buttress Bush's unequivocal support for business. When I asked him about the draconian anti-regulatory bills that the Republicans championed after the 1994 mid-term elections—which deliberately hampered the work of regulatory agencies such as the EPA by requiring that they conduct prohibitively expensive cost-benefit analyses of any old and newly proposed regulations—Lindsey defended the bills. "I believe cost-benefit analysis is [a] sound principle. I think that could be applied much more than it is now. I would stick by that," he said. Asked about labor unions, Lindsey is equivocal. He says that "the best world is one in which the worker has the maximum choice." He also thinks that, ideally, states should have "maximum flexibility" in setting the minimum wage.

Bush's other economic advisers have similar points of view. Timothy J. Muris, a law professor at George Mason University, was the director of the Federal Trade Commission's Bureau of Competition during Reagan's first term. He is an outspoken defender of large corporate mergers and a harsh critic of the current FTC's relatively mild antitrust initiatives. J.D. Foster, the executive director of the Tax Foundation, has promoted tax cuts and the privatization of Social Security. Columbia University economist Glenn Hubbard is the research director of the International Tax Policy Forum, an organization of multinationals that favors increasing the already substantial incentives for overseas investment. John F. Cogan, a fellow at the Hoover Institution, is another proponent of tax cuts and deregulation. Together, they reinforce Bush's instinctive outlook and also reassure his business supporters that, if he does become president, he will formulate specific policies to their liking.

THESE DAYS, A successful presidential candidate has to win three major contests. First, he or she must win the fund-raising contest that is staged the year before the election begins. With the single exception of Republican John Connally in 1980, each candidate who led in fund-raising on January 1 of the election year has eventually won his party's nomination. The second contest takes place in the primaries and caucuses themselves, and the third is the general election in the fall. Bush has already cinched the first by raising more money—$37,289,782—in the first half of this year than any candidate ever has. It was a stupendous achievement, and much of it was made possible by business leaders' perception that Bush is their best bet in 2000.

Some business leaders contributed to Bush because they were Republicans, and they saw him as the most viable candidate—one who had established sufficient distance from the religious right and the economic nationalists, whom they blame for the party's recent difficulties. Says Mark Bloomfield, president of the American Council for Capital Formation, "Many of them are Republicans, and they would give to a Republican candidate who they believe would win." There is also fear of a Gore victory. Bloomfield says that many business leaders have been alienated by Gore's book *Earth in the Balance*, which they believe is "anti-business." Ron Kaufman, a Washington lobbyist who is raising money for Bush, says, "There is a great reservation whether Al Gore will be an ecoterrorist when it comes to the environment."

More importantly, business leaders are up in arms over exactly those issues that Bush himself has highlighted. Frank Coleman, a vice president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, says, "Our number one issue, a top issue, is legal reform in all its many varieties." Richard Hug, a Maryland businessman who cochaired Bush's fund-raising event in Baltimore, said that deregulation is a key issue: "We're way overregulated. Everywhere you look there is a regulation." Said Kaufman of Bush's business contributors: "They want to see someone who is concerned [about the environment] but will allow business to grow and prosper in an atmosphere of deregulation. You won't have someone at the CEQ [Council of Environmental Quality] telling people in Austin how best to run their business."

Microsoft lobbyist and DeLay crony Grover Norquist calls Bush a "Reagan Republican," and Bush's relationship to business is indeed very similar to the relationship that Reagan acquired in May 1980 after he sewed up the Republican nomination. At that time, Reagan ceded control of his tax and regulatory policy to arch K Street lobbyist Charls Walker and his minions, and Reagan's first year in office represented the fulfillment of their dreams. Bush has a similar relationship to the business lobbyists of the '90s who, by flocking to his fund-raiser at the Washington Hilton, gave it the appearance of an inaugural ball. But, where Reagan was basically a man of the right—a disciple of Whittaker Chambers—rather than simply a business conservative, the less ideological Bush is much more a creature of the corporations, banks, and lobbies who have enthusiastically supported him as governor and now support him as presidential candidate. As an able politician, he will know when he has to distance himself from them, but they can be sure he will never stray far from the fold.

With the enthusiastic backing of business, Bush will win the fund-raising contest and, probably, his party's nomination. But that still won't guarantee a victory in November 2000. Like Connally in 1980, Bush may discover that his strength as a fund-raiser among business leaders is inversely proportional to his strength as a presidential candidate. Insofar as Bush's appeal to business contributors is based on his espousing views that, if fully and clearly articulated, run counter to the tradition of American pluralism and to the wishes of the majority of American voters, he could find himself in trouble in the election. But, for that to happen, his Democratic opponent will have to be at least as successful as the little girl at The Door in exposing the real nature of the Texan's views. ■

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Kubrick: A Sadness

IN THE SPRING of 1967, Robert Brustein, then dean of the Yale School of Drama, asked me to do a film course in the following academic year. I was to co-teach: I would meet the class one afternoon a week to deal with history and style, and on another day they would meet a filmmaker who would explore techniques. Brustein and I, both keen on the relatively recent *Dr. Strangelove*, decided to aim high and invite Stanley Kubrick for the filmmaking post. I agreed to approach Kubrick because I knew him slightly.

I had lunched with Kubrick in New York two years earlier. (One remark lingers. I praised Peter Sellers's three roles in *Dr. Strangelove*, and Kubrick said dryly, "Yes, three performances for the price of six.") We had lunched because I was inviting Kubrick to appear on a series about film that I was then doing on PBS in New York; he had seen some of the programs and was sufficiently interested to meet and talk about it, though eventually he declined. A year later, when I went to *The New York Times* as their theater critic—a brief sojourn, as it turned out—I had a warm note of congratulations from Kubrick.

So I now telephoned him, in England where he lived, to offer him the Yale job. He was pleased by the offer itself and, though highly dubious, said he wanted to consider it for a few days. And a few days later he wrote that he was sorry but he had to confirm his doubts. Two reasons were patent: he was now living abroad and he was working on a film. "This obviously makes it impossible." (Despite which, he had wanted to think it over.) "In addition to this," he said, "I have steadfastly avoided talks, lectures, etc., because they tend to formalize my own thinking, which I think would not be a good thing."

This was the last time I heard from him. I was in England fairly often thereafter, but I did not, as he had asked, ring him, because my reviews of his films, from *2001* on, were adverse, increasingly so. Neither of us would have enjoyed a meeting. But I never forgot his statement above because, as it seemed to me, it was almost a prophecy. In one way his thinking became increasingly formalized, came closer and closer to sheer formalism. "The formalist," says Rudolf Arnheim, "emancipates the medium from the content it is supposed to serve.... Rather than submerging in the content, form steps between the beholder and the theme of the work." This, it seemed to me, fit Kubrick more and more closely. Isolated—notoriously so—in his country home and in his studio, he became more concerned with filmmaking than with films. Yes, themes can be discerned in his work, and since his death the winkling out of Kubrick themes has bloomed into a small critical industry. Certainly violence and cynical bleakness are patent in his work, but they seem structural conveniences to him rather than burning concerns. From *2001* on, with longer and longer periods of time between pictures, he became centered on the solution of problems, technical and narrative, rather than on creating work aimed at the responses of the viewer. Solipsism became king in the Kubrick studio; formalism became supreme. This is a long way from design, which is a beauty and blessing in art, a means of affecting people. Formalism is a tyranny even when self-imposed, as it usually is.

And now we have Kubrick's final film, finished just before his sudden death (at seventy). It is much too aptly the finale of a declining career. **Eyes Wide Shut** (Warner Bros.) is a catastrophe—in both the popular sense and the classical sense of the end of a tragedy. Everything in Kubrick that had been worming through his career, through his ego, and through his extraordinary talent swells and devours this last film. It is a long slow exercise in self-admiration, in the formal fulfillment of film problems that he had set himself at the expense of the audience's involvement.

Begin with the title. It is completely meaningless before and after seeing the picture. Frederic Raphael, co-author with Kubrick of the screenplay, has written a lively short book about that experience, called *Eyes Wide Open* (!). In it, Raphael tells that they both scrounged for a title and that finally Kubrick proposed *Eyes Wide Shut*. "I refrained from any response," says Raphael, "except that of refraining from response. It was his movie." Later Raphael says, "Can he really consider *Eyes Wide Shut* a poetic title? If it incites him to make the movie, so be it." Raphael's reactions to the title are a neat implicit definition of formalism.

The screenplay is derived from a short novel by Arthur Schnitzler called *Dream Novel*, which I haven't read. However, Raphael synopsizes it in sufficient detail to confirm that the general outlines of the Schnitzler story and of the film are the same. Kubrick wanted the locale transposed from Schnitzler's Vienna around 1900 to New York today, an odd decision for a middle-European escapade. Everything that happens could possibly happen in New York—what couldn't happen in New York?—but the shape and the temper seem less at home here than in *alt Wien*.

A very successful doctor, Bill Harford, and his wife, Alice, are happily married and have a small child. Bill and Alice go to a large, lavish Christmas party, and each of them gets a chance for an affair. Alice rejects her offer; Bill is prevented from accepting his. But both offers raise thoughts of extramarital possibilities in them. Bill investigates those possibilities. (Alice's only venture is to confess a temptation the past summer which didn't actually end in bed but which Bill keeps imagining thereafter as a porno movie.) Bill gets a late-night call to the home of a patient who has suddenly died, and in the dead man's bedroom, his daughter, Marion, throws herself at Bill. He gets away but is so aroused that, while walking home, he lets a hooker take him to her apartment. But nothing happens there, either, because he gets a cell-phone call from his wife.

Yet that same night—with the help of a pianist friend—he sneaks his way into a masked orgy held by very rich men in a Long Island mansion. Costumed and masked—I omit description of the costumier's establishment, which is blatantly an exotic set-piece—he is nonetheless unmasked as an intruder before he can have sex. He just about escapes with his life, or at least that is what he is made to think.

The next day, further heated by a sexual nightmare that his wife recounts about her "lover" and by the porno film that he keeps imagining of his wife and that man, Bill tries to get in touch with Marion. Thwarted, he then tries to visit the hooker he met last night, but she is gone. She had been informed that morning that she is HIV positive, Bill is told by another hooker who tries to persuade him to accept her instead. But he leaves.

All the above has involved death threats

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to himself and others, Bill thinks, but these threats are shown to be mere concoctions of his fervid fantasy. At the end Bill and Alice are reunited, tearfully, as if each had been through some sexual trial by fire, though in fact neither has actually slept with anyone else and Alice hasn't even tried. They go shopping for a Christmas present for their small daughter, and in the department store, after some homiletic plot-concluding exchanges, Alice says to Bill, "There's something very important we must do as soon as possible." He asks what it is, and she says, "Fuck."

The point of this 157-minute picture seems clear. Every married person has within himself or herself a secret cosmos of sexual imaginings, longings, fantasies, and perhaps extramarital actions. The actual marital life of a husband and wife involves only a portion of the sexual cosmos of each. But Schnitzler wrote this story in 1926, and even then he set it back at the beginning of the century, presumably because he felt it was already a little out of date. Kubrick, who had been nursing this project for years, insisted not only on ignoring Schnitzler's recognition of the necessary pastness of the story, but on transposing it to New York. Thus Kubrick coolly disregarded all that his audience has encountered of enlightenment in these matters in this century, not least in the films of Ingmar Bergman.

Even the elementary matter of credibility is ignored. After that extensive nocturnal odyssey of his—summoned to a dead man's bedside, embraced by Marion, visiting a hooker, going to a nightclub where he is steered to an orgy on Long Island, renting a costume and mask at midnight, being taxied far out on Long Island, attending the orgy and escaping—he gets home in the morning and, as he falls into bed, merely murmurs to his wife, "It took longer than I thought."

Kubrick's very filmmaking acuteness seems to have been blunted. The scene in the costume shop is a faintly stale reminder of numerous old horror movies (including the mannequin scene in his own early *Killer's Kiss*). The orgy scene is redolent of *Seven Footprints to Satan* (1929) and many a Satanic thriller, especially because of Kubrick's clichéd close-ups of grotesque masks. (The music for the orgy, by Jocelyn Pook, is done on a piano struck, seemingly, with a sledgehammer.) Wit had virtually disappeared from later Kubrick pictures, but here he permits an actor to insert a modernized version of Franklin Pangborn's swishy hotel clerk, a fixture of 1930s comedies. At the end, after Bill has returned his costume but has presumably lost the mask (he has actually misplaced it at home), he returns to his apartment; and Kubrick slips in a shot of the orgy mask on the pillow next to the sleeping Alice before Bill goes into the bedroom, so that when he does go in there, sees the mask, and is shocked, we are not. Worse, fundamentally worse, is Kubrick's insensitivity to the constant abrasion between the whole fabulated escapade and the hyper-realism of the New York setting, characters, and dialogue.

As for that dialogue, it is freighted with repetitions. Examples:

> "We're going to the rainbow's end."
> "To the rainbow's end?"
> "To the rainbow's end."

> "I'm just trying to figure out where you're coming from."
> "Where I'm coming from?"

> "I had you followed."
> "You had me followed?"

Nearly three hours of this echo-chamber talk almost makes us beg for mercy, especially when it's all *molto andante*.

Kubrick wanted a married couple for his two leads. He first thought of Alec Baldwin and Kim Basinger, says Raphael, but he engaged Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman. When Cruise and Kidman were amorously busy in the film, I thought of the former theater stars Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne, married, who always included a pat on the behind or a touch of the bosom to give the audience a small thrill of private glimpse. That was pretty quaint compared to the Cruise-Kidman behavior, but it was the same principle.

Doubtless this couple would not decline roles just because they are married: it would be a denial of acting ability and adventure. And Kidman is moving, despite her limited voice, particularly in her two long speeches, the remembrances of a temptation and of her nightmare about it. Cruise, a proven powerful actor, seems here to be repressed and contained, deliberately slowed down by the director. His role is much larger than Kidman's and is less vivid. I'd hazard that Cruise was restrained by Kubrick in aid of some pattern the director had in mind, rather than the effect on the audience. More formalism! One other performance must be noted: the Swedish actress Marie Richardson plays Marion, and is excellent in her difficult transition from mourning to sexual outburst.

In the matter of sex, which is the matter of the film, Kubrick tinctures heavily with salaciousness, the particular salaciousness of aging film directors who have the power to display women as they like. Not because the film's first shot is of Kidman undressing—a stunning shot, in fact—nor because of Kubrick's insistence on showing her on the toilet chatting with her husband who is in the bathroom with her, nor of the rat-a-tat of the f-word in the dialogue (hardly a distinction these days), but because of Kubrick's insistence on showing as many naked female bodies as he can possibly crowd into his film. (Something like the latter-day Godard.) For instance, at the lavish Christmas party early in the picture, Doctor Bill is summoned by his host to attend a young woman whom the host has been screwing upstairs but who took a hard drug and is blotto. Any reasonably human person, like the host, would have covered her prone naked body, but Kubrick insists on her nakedness. This, he might have argued, was brutal candor, but it looks like brutal voyeurism.

So this is where the Kubrick career ends, with this technically accomplished, inadequately conceived work. Retrospect is inevitable. A young photographer claws his way into film (he shot his earliest pictures himself, adroitly), makes a war fantasy and two crime thrillers. None of them, as he himself said, is really worth looking at again; but what is extraordinary, and is insufficiently noted, is the change in texture and style from his third feature, *The Killing*, just one more Hollywood film noir struggling for eccentricity, to *Paths of Glory*, a grim drama about heartlessness in the French army in World War I. Of course, Kubrick had more money for that fourth feature, but it was spent by a very different director from the man who had made the third. He had suddenly become a sophisticated and excitingly fluent filmmaker. *Spartacus* was insufficiently appreciated because it is a costume spectacle, but it was directed with muscular imagination. Then came some work on Brando's *One-Eyed Jacks*, which Kubrick quit because, he said at our lunch, Brando was absolutely insane. Then *Lolita*, beautiful, whose only fault is that it isn't really the novel. Then *Dr. Strangelove*, a pinnacle. But then the decline into cinematic display, from *2001* to the end: the preening pride in being figuratively alone and literally imperial. Perforce there had to be stories and actors, but, seemingly, they were only necessary nuisances for Kubrick.

At the last, he had become an advanced cinematic constructor, virtuosic but immured. In another guise, the formalism that he dreaded had prevailed. ■

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Aria of Myself

By PAUL BERMAN

Walt Whitman: The Song of Himself by Jerome Loving

(University of California Press, 568 pp., $35)

THERE HAVE BEEN some fifteen biographies of Walt Whitman so far. Why should we need another? Jerome Loving, the author of the sixteenth, makes the case that, previous to his own book, the last full-scale effort to assemble any large number of useful new biographical facts was mounted in 1955, by Gay Wilson Allen, in his fat and well-researched *The Solitary Singer*, which has remained the standard reference. Since then, however, many a new fact has turned up, and some of the older facts have turned out to be in error, and so the story needs another telling. This is a passable argument. It is the basis on which Loving has constructed his own fat and scholarly volume. But it is not the real reason we need a new biography.

The real reason is that, in our age, it has become harder and harder to read Whitman in anything like the proper spirit. Whitman wrote in weirdly booming tones that his own contemporaries right away identified with Homer, the Hebrew Prophets, Dante, and Shakespeare—tones of grandeur, the deepest tones of all. But ours is an age of the indirect and the slight—an age in love with surfaces and margins. Presented with evidence of anything grand or large, modern eyes instinctively shift to the side. Whitman's name comes up, and the conversation naturally turns to sex—to the burning question of whether the poet acted on his homosexual urges. Or to politics, especially racial politics—to how puzzling it is that Whitman expressed the opinions of his own time, and not those of our time. Or to popular music and street life and dime novels—to every one of the characteristic obsessions of university life today. And yet, as everyone who has dipped into *Leaves of Grass* at least dimly recognizes, Whitman himself, the real Whitman, the brother of Dante and Homer, was not principally interested in politics, in race, in popular culture, or even in sex—though each of those topics drew his attention.

Among the modern biographies, the one book that does focus in any reliable way on Whitman's own best achievements is still, after all these years, *Walt Whitman: The Making of the Poet*, by Paul Zweig, from 1984. Zweig was a poet who came up at Columbia University during the 1950s, and the atmosphere that he evoked in his book about Whitman had a lot in common with the atmosphere of the literary underground around Morningside Heights in that time—an atmosphere of artistic experimentation, impatient with anything prissy or over-refined, cheerfully subversive, open to moods of pop-eyed inebriation. Whitman, for Zweig, was a man of the avant-garde, perhaps a New York cousin of the nineteenth-century French Symbolists, rougher and more plebeian than anybody among the French but just as devoted to the purity of art. All of which seems true enough. But then Zweig, in his fervor for the avant-garde, did not want to see much philosophical content in Whitman, and did not want to burden him with anything hinting at mere doctrine, apart from strictly literary doctrine. And so, among the modern biographers, not even Zweig could get at the deepest Whitman of all. For the real Whitman was not, finally, a purist of the arts.

The real Whitman was agog with doctrines. He was an Emersonian; and tipsy as Emerson was, from everything that he had learned from the philosophers of German Idealism. In *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman invoked the names of very few poets, apart from his own name. But he made a point of invoking the philosophers:

> Having studied the new and antique, the
> Greek and Germanic systems,
> Kant having studied and stated, Fichte
> and Schelling and Hegel....

He invoked those same philosophers in his prose writings, too—Hegel, especially, whom he loved. The biography that we need, the modern biography that has never been written, would take those invocations seriously, and would go back to the philosophers and show us something of their ideas, and what those ideas became in Whitman's hands. We would see how it was that Whitman arrived at the great, dominating notion that he shared with Emerson: his ecstatic belief that behind the visible universe lies a different universe entirely, the truer universe, which is the realm of spirit.

We would see what Whitman did not share with Emerson, too, which was his simple, yearning belief that the invisible universe of spirit is also the universe of death. (The idea is implicit in Emerson, but explicit in Whitman, chanted and sung—the idea that animated Whitman more forcefully than any other.) And we would see the grand peculiarity in Whitman's personality, his gigantic strangeness, which came from the deep conviction, the mad and messianic belief, that he himself was speaking to us from that other, more distant universe, the realm that cannot be seen, the universe of spirit and of death—the peculiar belief that renders Whitman not just ecstatic and robust and warm, but also (at a deeper level) icy; the belief that allows him to be just as cheerful and uplifting as his less attentive readers take him to be, and at the same time to be the poet of blackest tragedy; the belief that makes him beckon to himself, instead of pointing to the stars, like Emerson; that makes him a man of consolations, and of coffins.

TO MODERN TASTES, the best of the several editions of *Leaves of Grass* is plainly the first, from 1855, the strangest and most liquid edition of all, where the separate poems spill into one another without so much as a title to keep them apart, and where the volume itself comes with no identification for the author, only an engraving showing the poet as worker. Whitman himself was aware that some people always did prefer that edition. But if we could only see him in his full dimension, we would notice something else, too—that his vision of another universe was more than a literary conceit, that it was perfectly authentic and therefore never falters. What he added, after 1855, the several hundred pages and innumerable alterations that eventually swelled up into the Deathbed Edition of 1892, could not always hold to his own standards. There are entire poems that Whitman dashed off for no other purpose than to fill the page. (Loving tells us that "grass" was a printer's term for exactly that kind of writing, for the gibberish added by a printer to fill a page.)

But once we have accepted that Whitman is speaking from some other plane,

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we ought to be able to see that even the flabbiest and the most pompous of his later poems are, in a sense, no less grand than his grandest—that everything in the Deathbed Edition, the dull lists and the pedantic citations of Kant and Hegel and the patriotic bombast, each of the pages and not just the best, carries an echo from the other universe. It is the otherworldly echo that makes Whitman's poems about sex not really about sex, and his poems about politics not really about politics, and his poems about America not really about America—or rather, makes the poems be exactly what they appear to be, and also something else. For his every clever conceit is actually two conceits, and each of his poems operates on the plane of the real and also on the plane of the ethereal, and every note is its own overtone, two thousand octaves higher.

That is what a modern biographer needs to explain. And yet the whole trend in modern biography leans toward showing something else—toward showing each tiny detail in a writer's life that might go under the rubric "human, all too human," and away from showing anything that hints, as Whitman is always hinting, at the more than human. The biography that we really need would tell us how Whitman learned to express that strange depth and grandeur of his. And it would tell us what to listen for, how to open our ears.

WHITMAN HIMSELF, in his garrulousness, already provided some of the basic clues, not just in his nods to the Bible and Shakespeare but in his discussions of music. In one of his conversations with Horace Traubel he got onto the topic of his favorite opera baritones and ended up saying that "a real musician running through *Leaves of Grass*—a philosopher-musician—could put his finger on this and that anywhere in the text," and point to the musical influences. What would those influences be? Operatic ones, mostly. It is to Jerome Loving's credit that he quotes Whitman's arresting remark, "But for the opera, I could not have written *Leaves of Grass*."

We know quite a bit about the opera in New York during Whitman's time. A New York lawyer and music-lover named George Templeton Strong kept an enormous diary throughout the middle of the nineteenth century, and his account of the music scene, heroically edited with detailed commentaries by Vera Brodsky Lawrence, has been published by the University of Chicago Press in two solid volumes, with a third volume imminent, all under the title *Strong on Music*. Strong's journals and Lawrence's annotations offer a panorama of the old gaslit Park and Bowery Theatres, the symphony concerts, the blackface minstrels, and the Italian opera, too. It is good to be reminded of how novel, and therefore difficult, a composer such as Verdi could seem. Strong attended the early performances of Verdi's *Ernani*, and at one of them he got sick and had to flee the theater. Verdi's melodies, in Strong's judgment, "want feeling and even *musical* expression"—a typical opinion of the time.

We know, too, which operas Whitman attended. A monograph from 1951 by Robert D. Faner called *Walt Whitman and Opera* lists them all and shrewdly speculates about a few of the inspirations that Whitman might have drawn. It cannot be said that Loving has added to any of this. He usefully observes, just as Faner did, that Whitman borrowed from opera the simple method of alternating recitatives with arias—of alternating the rhythms and the melodies of song with the more complex and less melodic meanderings of conversational speech. You see that kind of alternation in Whitman's long poem "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," and in many other places. But when Whitman himself pointed to opera's influence on *Leaves of Grass*, when he said the book could not have been written without it, surely he had something larger in mind. And to see what he must have meant, all you have to do is listen to the particular operas that he invokes in the poetry, and look into those operas a little more closely.

Ernani is a good example. Whitman responded to *Ernani* with a lot more enthusiasm than George Templeton Strong could work up. In *Leaves of Grass* he invokes it twice, in "Proud-Music of the Sea-Storm," with a mention of the opera's climactic scene, and again in "The Dead Tenor," with a memory of a glorious singer "with Spanish hat and plumes," who must have sung the title role. *Ernani* was the product of a fantastically rapid development of ideas and expression in the nineteenth century. The opera began as a work of poetry, not as a work of musical theater—as a verse play by Victor Hugo, under the title *Hernani*, in 1830. Hugo's intention was to show emotions of a new kind, wilder emotions than anything ever shown before (as he imagined)—to show violent passions for revolutionary justice, and violent passions for romantic love, the emotions of young people ablaze with contempt for the strictures of conventional society. His idea was to take the traditional verse techniques of classical French theater and slyly to heat them up, in poetic acts of rebellious provocation.

The conservative bias of the French theater was vast, and Hugo's provocations, back in 1830, were received with angry indignation. Shouting broke out at the

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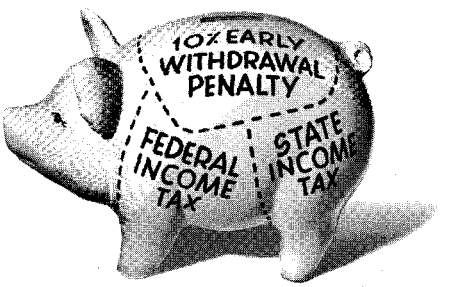

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opening of the play between rival factions in the audience—the conservatives in outrage, the young romantics in appreciative defense. But it must be said that, from any perspective other than one of extreme French conservatism, Hugo's provocations were mild enough—imperceptible, in fact, to modern eyes. The entire play, all five acts of it, wavers not even once from the strictest formula of twelve-syllable alexandrine lines arranged in heroic couplets—a structure that lends a tone of marble orderliness to every perfect phrase. The overall effect of Hugo's *Hernani*—the true effect that Hugo's admirers and detractors could not possibly see at the time—can only be laughable. Giant emotions cry out to the audience from behind their tiny prison windows of highly repressed formal lines. Everything that is supposed to seem wild ends up looking ridiculous.

Then Verdi took hold of Hugo's idea and converted the entire French operation into Italian opera, as if with an ax. He chopped up the orderly rhythms. He sent vast walls of sound and texture and loudness crashing into one another. He exploited the richness of Italian as a musical language—took single vowels and handed them over to his singers to bend and to inflect as they chose. His orchestrations surged, and subsided. The result might have been hard to appreciate for conventional New Yorkers in 1848, when Strong saw the opera. But if you stand Verdi's version next to Hugo's, *Ernani* against *Hernani*, and run your eyes from one to the other, you can see that Verdi made enormous discoveries about human psychology—invented ways to show emotion not just in its slow evolutions but in its violent upswings and rushes; emotion unfolding at a faster tempo than anyone had ever showed it before. Verdi made it explosive.

Those were the achievements that went pouring into Walt Whitman's ear during those same years, beginning in the late 1840s, when he took to spending his evenings at the touring productions of Verdi and the other composers. And it is obvious what happened next. The sounds, having poured in, did not pour out again. Either gradually or in a flash of insight, Whitman realized that he could convert those vigorous and extravagant Italian sounds back into verse.

You can hear the results as soon as you compare *Leaves of Grass* to poetry by Longfellow or Emerson. The music in Longfellow's ear could have been sung by a clear, untrained voice over the simplest of guitar strums—a music you can sway to. The music in Emerson's ear was austere and Protestant—the melody of hymnals, sung by people theologically indifferent to the niceties of musical sophistication. But the sound in Whitman's ear was infinitely more flexible and sensuous. It could expand and shrink, could swell and fall back, could heave like a weeping bosom, could shout, whisper, and never lose its melodic consistency. Longfellow and Emerson worshipped the syllable. You can define their rhythms with stress marks and numbers. Emerson's highest ambition was to retreat into Old English monosyllables, and in that way achieve the purest, simplest rhythms of all—to find his way back to a refreshing barbarism full of grunting noises from ancient Germanic tribes. Emerson wanted to be able to say, as he did in a famous line, "Hay, corn, roots, hemp, flax, apples, wool, and wood."

Walt Whitman by David Schorr for The New Republic

Whitman could do that, too, at least in his earlier poems, in a slightly weirder Brooklyn version: "The blab of the pave, tires of carts, sluff of boot-soles." But then other moods would play upon him, and he would push aside his Old English gruffness and indulge himself instead with big Latinate words that fill the mouth—chewy consonants and fat vowels that you could imagine an Italian tenor warbling from the stage, tonsils vibrating wildly. One of the more Latinate poems begins, "Once I passed through a populous city, imprinting my brain, for future use, with its shows, architecture, customs, and traditions." I adore the "imprinting." But "architecture" is a treasure.

The line nearly staggers to a halt with that word, suspended for a long, pregnant duration of false digraph and true digraph (in which "ch" is pronounced as "k," and "tu" is pronounced as "ch")—a spacious, sustained, ruminating tone that could never be imputed to a Germanic tribe or tallied by counting syllables and stresses. It is as if Whitman, against the entire tradition of American poetry, had discovered an Italian quiver, wide and expressive, a sumptuousness that allowed him to vary his rhythms and his embellishments in still another way, by opening his throat wider, and wider yet, and now constricting it, and in that way making tone into a new kind of rhythm.

Whitman learned something else from the Italian opera, too. He learned the form of the trio and the quartet. You can see the consequences in "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" (which he himself described, in one of his anonymous newspaper articles celebrating his own poetry, as having followed "strictly the method of the Italian opera"). For what is remarkable in a poem like "Out of the Cradle" is not really the alternation between aria and recitative, and not even the alternation between Latinate vibrato and English stress-and-syllable counting, but the number of voices that Whitman manages to get on stage at the same time, all singing

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at once. There is the he-bird who calls to the vanished she-bird, the young boy who observes the brokenhearted he-bird, the mature man who remembers the young boy, and the poet himself, speaking to us from his universe of spirit and of death—in essence, a full operatic quartet, soprano, alto, tenor, and bass, each voice chanting its own message: of love, of heartbreak, of death, of song.

In "Proud-Music of the Sea-Storm," Whitman mentions, among other operas, *Lucia di Lammermoor*. I find it easy to imagine that *Lucia*, or something with *Lucia*'s traits, was echoing in the poet's ear when he sat down to write "Out of the Cradle." The tenor in *Lucia* cries out "Si! si! si!," and the he-bird in Whitman's poem cries, "Shine! shine! shine!" And, just as Donizetti returns later in the opera to his "Si! si! si!" except this time in a darker tone, Whitman, too, later in his poem, intones, first in one voice, "Loved! loved! loved! loved! loved!" and then, in a darker voice, "death, death, death, death, death"—"hissing melodious," as he says.

Loving tells us that "it is because of Italian opera that *Leaves of Grass* must be read aloud to appreciate its full power." But you cannot read *Leaves of Grass* aloud—at least a normal person with an untrained voice cannot, except in a highly unsatisfactory way. It is precisely because of Italian opera. "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" is written in coloratura, *Lucia*-like. You would have to be Maria Callas to deliver this poem aloud:

> O rising stars!
> Perhaps the one I want so much will rise,
> will rise with some of you.
>
> O throat! O trembling throat!
> Sound clearer through the atmosphere!
> Pierce the woods, the earth,
> Somewhere listening to catch you
> must be the one I want.
>
> Shake out carols!
> Solitary here, the night's carols!
> Carols of lonesome love! death's carols!

Whitman himself knew very well what kind of vocal technique he was evoking on the page. That is why, in *Leaves of Grass*, he cites not only his several philosophers by name, and not only the titles of operas, but also the revered name of Marietta Alboni, the Italian contralto. Alboni's New York performances in the early 1850s marked a turning point in Whitman's life. Loving quotes him saying that "her singing, her method, gave the foundation, the start, thirty years ago, to all my poetic literary effort since." You might wonder why he turned to the Italians and not to Wagner, given that Wagner's genius, like his own, was to create an art of the otherworldly, and given that Wagner, too, was a student of those German philosophers. Whitman's friends put that question to him. He conceded, if only to be gracious, that maybe his friends were right, and Wagner should have been his man.

But Whitman had no need for Wagner. He was already a master of the other world. He needed the throaty, liquid sound of the Italians—the qualities that make his cadences fleshy and sensual and not just interesting and varied. For the fleshiness, too, figures in his grandeur and his depth—the fleshiness that makes you feel, as you turn his pages, that you are physically and not just metaphysically in touch with the sublime and the eternal, and that every note from the poetry is passing through your body and not just through your imagination. Whitman said of *Leaves of Grass*, "Who touches this, touches a man." But it is more than that. Who reads Whitman, becomes Whitman. Your eye follows his long-breathed lines across the page, and you vibrate, just as you do at a well-performed opera, and if you read carefully enough, you might even cry sometimes, just as you do at the opera. And you tremble, which is what, in our modern mood, we no longer want to do, and cannot explain, and do not even wish to discuss.

Jerome Loving has piled up his biographical facts with great avidity, but I'm not sure how much insight he has added to what you can get from other writers from the years before and since Gay Wilson Allen's book—the appreciation of the poetry that you can get from Zweig, or of the opera attendance that you can read about in Faner's monograph, or of Whitman the man and the writer that you can get from an enjoyable biography by Justin Kaplan, *Walt Whitman: A Life*, from 1980, or of the larger cultural environment that you can get from a book by David S. Reynolds, *Walt Whitman's America*, from 1995. Reynolds's volume is particularly helpful and pleasing, owing to its mass of arcane factoids on popular doctrines of the mid-nineteenth century—on the sundry humbugs and theories that produced those many bizarre terms in *Leaves of Grass*: "Kosmos," "electrical fluids," "effluxes of the soul," and that sort of thing.

Reynolds even comes up with a sensational new biographical fact, a rumor, anyway, unsubstantiated but loyally passed down from generation to generation in eastern Long Island (and reported previously in the scholarly literature, though

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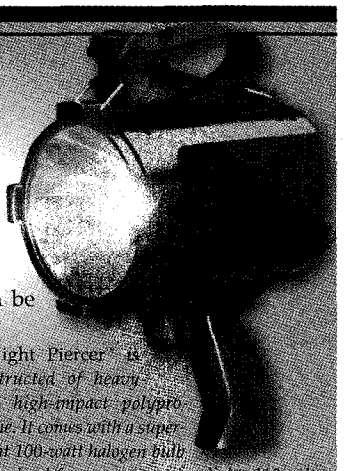

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never in a book). According to that rumor, Whitman, during his time as a young schoolteacher on Long Island, was caught in a scandalous homosexual relation with a student, and was publicly tarred and feathered, which is to say, tortured. The tarring and feathering, if it took place at all, must have been a devastating experience—the kind of trauma that might have led the poet, afterward, to withdraw from his everyday experience and to think of himself as dead.

Loving offers no comment on that particular story. He doesn't even mention it, which is too bad, since a second opinion might help us decide how much credence to give the rumor. Some of the details that Loving does offer are presented a little sloppily. He reminds us that Emerson sent Whitman a letter in 1855 saying that he "felt much like striking my tasks, & visiting New York to pay you my respects." And Loving tells us that, sure enough, in December Emerson "struck his tasks and visited Whitman in Brooklyn." But, in reality, no tasks were struck. Emerson visited Whitman because his lecture tour brought him to Brooklyn anyway (as Loving duly records), and Whitman lived close by.

The December visit, according to Loving, took place at the Whitman family home on Ryerson Street, off Myrtle Avenue. That is how Whitman himself remembered the event later; but in reality the family had sold the Ryerson Street house by December, which suggests that Whitman's memory was probably in error. None of those slips on Loving's part amount to much, but they do chip away at my confidence in his scholarly punctiliousness. On one page he tells us that Whitman "may or may not" have been fired from a federal job by the Secretary of the Interior because *Leaves of Grass* was considered obscene; but twenty-four pages later the "may not" quietly disappears, and Loving says of the Secretary that "he then dismissed the poet for writing indecent literature." Loving quotes Thoreau's description of Whitman as "the greatest democrat the world has seen." He seems not to realize that Thoreau was being sardonic and dismissive, which is obvious enough if you take the trouble to look up Thoreau's letter.

Loving's writing is none too careful, either. About one of Whitman's champions in the press, the editor Henry Clapp, Loving says, "Unknown until now, Clapp also published other poems from the 1860 edition-to-be in the *Press* of February 11"—though what Loving means is not that Clapp has been unknown until now, but that, instead, his publication of the poems has just now been revealed by Loving himself. And every now and then Loving says something that I can't follow at all: "Though he probably had his spiritual crises, the poet was an essentialist to the last."

So the new biography has its irritating qualities. Still, Loving offers a number of useful corrections to errors that have crept into the various studies by his predecessors. He doubts that Whitman actually wrote some of the unsigned newspaper editorials of the 1840s that are ascribed to him—for instance, the violently anti-Irish statements in the *Aurora*. It is nice to hear that, and convincing, too, if only because the nasty prejudice expressed in the editorials finds no echo, none at all, in the poetry. Loving also comes up with a series of new details about Whitman's career during the Civil War, tending to "the Army of the Sick" in the military hospitals of Washington, D.C. He never loses patience with Whitman, which has to be counted as an additional virtue—never accuses Whitman of selling out the working class, for instance, as David Reynolds ends up doing. Loving's account of Whitman's intense friendships with various young men is pleasingly relaxed on the sexual question. And Loving provides a number of vivid descriptions—for instance, one of Whitman at the funeral of his mother in 1873.

The service took place at the home of the poet's brother, George Washington Whitman, in New Jersey. Thirty people sat in the front room. Loving quotes a description by the daughter of one of Whitman's friends, who attended the funeral and looked back on it many years later, in 1919. The daughter remembered being distracted by a thumping sound from the next room, where the coffin stood. She peered through a doorway to see what was making the noise. And there she spotted the grief-stricken poet, sitting at the coffin's side. Whitman was fifty-four years old, but his labors in the military hospitals had permanently ruined his health, and he was already an elderly figure, half-paralyzed from a recent stroke. The woman remembered: "He was bent over his cane, both hands clasped upon it, and from time to time he would lift and bring it down with a heavy thud on the floor."

The death of his mother was one of the worst moments of Walt Whitman's life. Yet even on that terrible day, a cadence or rhythm seems to have remained his fundamental instinct, irregular ("from time to time") but strangely memorable (the woman recalled those heavy thuds forty-six years later). You can imagine that Whitman was thumping, at a level of articulation lower than words—much lower—"Loved! loved! loved! loved! loved!" And "Death, death, death, death, death." ■

Appeal and Consent

By RICHARD A. POSNER

Taking the Constitution Away from the Courts by Mark Tushnet

(Princeton University Press, 242 pp., $29.95)

AMERICAN LAW IS rich grazing land for sacred cows, and no parcel is more sacred than the power of the Supreme Court to invalidate federal statutes and state statutes and executive actions on the ground that the challenged law or action is in conflict with the Constitution. But this power of "judicial review," as constitutional lawyers like to call it, is now being questioned by a politically and methodologically diverse group of law professors and jurists, including Jack Balkin, Michael Klarman, Sanford Levinson, Richard Parker, Mark Tushnet, and (ex-judge and ex-law professor) Robert Bork. (Bork would not abolish the power of judicial review outright, but he would weaken it greatly by allowing Congress to override judicial decisions invalidating a federal statute.) Tushnet has now presented a book-length defense of this interesting heresy. The book is a compilation of previously published and heavily revised articles, which is not the best format for presenting a single grand thesis; but it is still a valuable addition to the swelling chorus of "judicial review" skeptics.

RICHARD A. POSNER is Chief Judge of the Seventh Circuit. His new book, *An Affair of State: The Investigation, Impeachment, and Trial of President Clinton*, will be published in September by Harvard University Press.

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Sacred cows are to be kicked, but they rarely can be killed. This one certainly cannot be killed. Although the Constitution does not say explicitly that a court can invalidate a statute or any other official act that violates the Constitution, such a power is implicit in the text, and it has been assumed, affirmed, and exercised for the last two hundred years or so. Moreover, there is no movement to repeal it, which anyway would probably require a constitutional amendment. The Supreme Court is unlikely to "discover" that it has been usurping the authority of the other branches of government for two centuries.

Yet the quixotic nature of the attacks on judicial review, and their political unreality, does not mean that they are futile, or purely "academic." For if these critics of judicial review are right, then the courts ought to be hesitant, at the very least, to exercise the power of judicial review. This is, in fact, an old view, which was powerfully argued by James Bradley Thayer in 1893. It may become more popular than it currently is if Tushnet and the other skeptics succeed in convincing enough people that their criticism has merit.

THE ARGUMENTS AGAINST judicial review are both theoretical and empirical. The skeptics observe, for a start, that people, including officials, take the Constitution seriously even when there is no prospect of judicial enforcement. We saw this in the Clinton impeachment: although the courts take a hands-off attitude toward impeachment, Congress was careful not to stray outside the mainstream of arguable interpretations of the various constitutional provisions bearing on impeachment. Imaginative arguments that would have strained the constitutional text and understanding, such as the argument that the Senate could convict the President of high crimes and misdemeanors yet decide not to remove him from office, were ruled out of bounds. As Tushnet argues, plausible charges of unconstitutionality can be highly effective political rhetoric. Legislators and other officials are likely to take the Constitution *more* seriously if they cannot pass the buck to the courts. For they are more likely to be blamed for unconstitutional actions if there is no mode of correction.

Similarly, the critics continue, the public is unlikely to take an active interest in the Constitution if constitutional interpretation is the preserve of a small and esoteric judicial mandarinate. Judicial review tells the public that the Constitution is the business of the judges, not the business of the people. Tushnet argues that the judicialization of the Constitution has deprived constitutional rhetoric of the political and moral power that it possessed when Lincoln appealed to the spirit of the Constitution (broadly interpreted to include the Declaration of Independence) in his denunciation of slavery.

Where the Constitution is clear, for example in entitling each state to two senators regardless of population, there is no need for judicial review to determine whether there has been a violation. The violation would be obvious, and (save in an extraordinary crisis) the people would be indignant. Where the Constitution is unclear, judicial review is likely to be guided by the political prejudices and the policy preferences of the judges rather than by the Constitution itself. The text is so old, and the controversies over its meaning are so charged with political significance, that constitutional "interpretation" in doubtful cases (the only cases likely to be litigated) is bound to be creative and discretionary rather than constrained and interpretive.

This would be fine, if a committee of unelected lawyers, which is what the Supreme Court is, had the resources for informed lawmaking; but it does not, largely owing to its under-specialization. Constitutional law covers a vast domain of policy issues, from immigration to education, from poor relief to homosexual rights, from crime to religious liberty. The Justices are rarely well informed about any of them. For this reason, constitutional decisions, lacking guidance either from the text of the Constitution or from a body of expert knowledge, are likely to reflect, and to enact, the prejudices of the social set, the "class," the cultural elite, from which Justices of the Supreme Court are drawn.

Courts also lack the tools needed to effectuate unpopular constitutional rulings. They can forbid public school segregation, but they cannot prevent (or they lack the political will to prevent) parents from putting their children in private schools or moving to lily-white neighborhoods. (Busing is a highly imperfect remedy for such "white flight.") Courts can create new constitutional rights for criminal defendants, but they cannot muster the will to forbid legislatures to respond by making sentences more severe, or by starving the lawyers for indigent criminal defendants of essential resources, or by curtailing nonconstitutional rights of criminal suspects. As a consequence of their limited fact-finding capacity, courts cannot even monitor compliance with their rules effectively; police who fail to give *Miranda* warnings can testify that they did, and they will usually be believed.

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Supreme Court at its apex; and cases, above all major constitutional cases, are often dramatic and exciting. For this reason, the institution of judicial review has caused constitutional debate and analysis to focus excessively on the agenda of the Supreme Court. Parts of the Constitution that for one reason or another do not generate much litigation (such as Congress's exclusive right, regularly flouted with impunity, to declare war), and constitutional claims that the Court decisively rejects (such as the claim that the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment requires equalizing per-pupil expenditures across public school districts in a state), are off the radar screen, however intrinsically important they are. Instead of studying issues, constitutional scholars study Supreme Court opinions, even though the Justices (who are just lawyers, remember) often know little about the issues that they decide.

Epitaph for a Pair of Old Shoes

Humble, born to the earth,
They knew where they stood.

When they moved,
It was because they must.

Anger moved them,
And the desire to be elsewhere,

Or something in them
Responding to music.

They knew also
What waiting can be.

Side by side, they mastered it,
Like an old married couple.

Donald Justice

ALL THESE ARGUMENTS against judicial review are powerful, but they are not conclusive. Some constitutional scholars cling to the faith, though it seems no more than that to me, that the Constitution, when it is read carefully against the historical background out of which it arose and against the course of the judicial interpretation of it and against the techniques of "legal reasoning," really does resolve such distinctively modern issues as Internet pornography, homosexual marriage, abortion rights, automobile searches, sex-segregated military academies, hate speech, public school prayer, affirmative action, campaign financing, neglect by social workers of foster children, the regulation of advertising, the firing of tenured civil servants without cause—the very issues that furnish the agenda of the modern Supreme Court. Another weak point in favor of judicial review, self-regarding and condescending, is that judicial review gives the Supreme Court a platform from which to lecture the American people on their civic and moral obligations. Empirical studies by Gerald Rosenberg and others have shown that Americans do not take their ethical cues from the judiciary.

More persuasive is the argument that the power of judicial review secures the core of the Constitution against infringement. Clear violations are unlikely to be litigated—or if they are litigated, to generate appeals all the way up to the Supreme Court. The result is a misleading selection bias: the cases "selected" for decision by the Supreme Court are those on the legal frontier, and so are bound to be dominated by cases to which the Constitution does not speak with clarity, thus licensing judicial discretion.

This is a difficult argument to test, because we cannot rerun history without judicial review and count the clear violations. We know that there have been clear violations, notwithstanding judicial review. But just as dogs bark loudest at passersby when the dog is secure behind a fence, so legislatures are most likely to pass unconstitutional laws when they know that the courts will strike them down. In that way legislators, without doing any harm, still get political credit with the interest group that advocated the law—the credit for "trying."

Sometimes the public pressure for violating the Constitution is immense, as when Lincoln suspended habeas corpus, or when Congress and state legislatures cracked down on radical speech during and after World War I, and after World War II. (Other examples are the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II, the enactment of gun-control laws in evident violation of the Second Amendment's right to bear arms, and the repeated flouting, most recently in Kosovo, of Congress's exclusive right to declare war.) In such cases, however, the courts are ignored (as in the case of Lincoln's refusal to comply with the writ of habeas corpus issued by Chief Justice Taney), or the courts flinch, as in each of the other examples that I have just given, by interpreting the Constitution loosely or, as in the case of the war power, declaring a constitutional claim unsuitable for judicial consideration.

In defense of judicial review it may also be argued that courts (especially federal courts, with their unelected, life-tenured judges) do have some important advantages over ordinary lawmakers, despite the undoubted limitations of their capacities in some respects. They are insulated from most of the political pressures that bedevil elected legislatures, pressures that sometimes reflect selfish and parochial interests, ugly emotion, ignorance, irrational fear, and prejudice. This insulation, together with the traditions and the usages of the bench and the fact that the higher federal judges are screened for competence and integrity, confers on the judges a power of detached and intelligent reflection on policy issues that is a valuable complement to the consideration of these issues by ordinary lawmakers.

Of even greater importance is the fact that ordinary lawmaking has built-in blockages, structural impediments to the effective functioning of democratic government, that often only the courts can remove. The clearest example is the reluctance of a malapportioned legislature to reapportion itself, since the legislators who benefit from the malapportionment will fight like the devil against reapportionment. Officials may seek to entrench themselves with laws forbidding "unfair" criticisms of officials; incumbent legislators may try to make it hard for challengers to finance their campaigns or to get a place on the ballot; unpopular minorities may lack sufficient political influence to ward off discriminatory legislation; and the sheer inertia of the legislative process—the fact that it is as difficult to repeal a statute as to enact a new statute—allows many obsolete, unpopular, even irrational laws to remain on the books and to cause occasional mischief. Congress's seniority system, combined with Democratic domination of Southern politics, gave Southern congressmen and senators the power (until the 1960s) to block civil rights legislation strongly supported by a majority of Americans, producing a legislative log-jam that only the federal courts, wielding the power of judicial review, could break.

FOR ALL THESE REASONS, the theoretical argument against judicial review must be judged inconclusive, and so we must consider the empirical evidence. But the empirical analysis of judicial review is bedeviled by the problem of counterfactuality to which

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I have already alluded: we know what the Supreme Court has done in the name of judicial review, but we do not know what legislatures would have done if the Supreme Court had disclaimed the power of judicial review. Still, we can make some pretty good guesses.

Official racial segregation of public schools in the South would not have ended so soon if the Court had not decided *Brown* v. *Board of Education*, although it surely would have ended many years ago. Many state legislatures would no doubt have remained malapportioned to this day had it not been for *Baker* v. *Carr* and the cases following it. Connecticut and Massachusetts would have retained, for a time anyway, their laws forbidding the sale of contraceptives, had it not been for the Court's decisions invalidating the laws. A number of states would still have highly restrictive laws concerning abortion.

WHAT THESE CASES have in common, and what enables reliable counterfactual prediction in them, is that they all involve the use of novel constitutional principles to invalidate long-existing laws. When those laws were adopted, there was no basis for thinking them unconstitutional, and so these are not cases in which a legislature not shielded by judicial review from the consequences of its actions would have hesitated to act. These laws would have been enacted, at the same time and in the same form, had there been no power of judicial review, and—such is the inertia of the legislative process—they would have lasted longer, in some instances much longer, had the Court not exercised that power to strike them down.

These are cases in which the power of judicial review clearly made a difference. The unclear cases are those in which legislation was passed in the teeth of the Constitution, such as the federal laws—which the Supreme Court struck down—forbidding the burning of the American flag. We do not know whether, in the absence of the power of judicial review, Congress would still have passed such constitutionally questionable laws. Opposition within Congress would no doubt have been greater had opponents not had a second line of defense—namely, judicial review of the laws. They could swallow their doubts and allow the Court to strike down the laws, and thus avoid the wrath of their constituents.

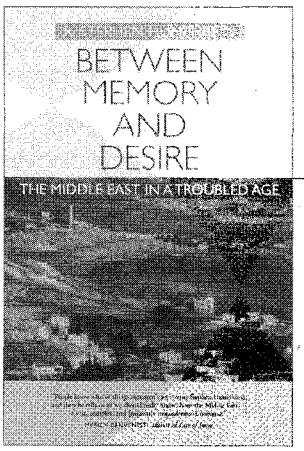
We can also—this is Michael Klarman's tack—look at the cases in which judicial review does seem to have made a difference, and ask whether these cases, taken all in all, have made the nation better off in some sense on which most of us might agree. Obviously it is not enough just to pick one's favorites. We must consider—it is a daunting task, unfortunately—the full array, over time and through policy space, of the decisions invalidating federal and state legislative and executive action on constitutional grounds.

WE MUST CONSIDER the consequences in the long term as well as in the short term. Viewed in the short term, the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown* v. *Board of Education*, striking down public school segregation, was a triumph of enlightened social policy. From a longer perspective, however, the decision seems much less important, even marginal. For very little actual enforcement of minority rights occurred until the enactment of anti-discrimination legislation in the 1960s, and that legislation appears to have owed much more to the non-legalistic civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King Jr. than to anything the Supreme Court had done or said.

The same may be said of the women's movement. It, too, seems to owe little to the Court, and much to transformations in women's role in society that have mainly technological causes (better contraceptive methods, lower infant mortality, improved household labor-saving devices, and the reduced importance of physical strength in the job market). *Roe* v. *Wade* undoubtedly increased the national rate of abortion, but no one can say with any confidence whether that is good or bad.

In periods of real threat to constitutional values, the Court tends to take a back seat, and at other times—the present time, for example—its constitutional interventions tend simply to impede efforts to experiment with solutions to social problems, whether those experiments take the form of prohibitions against hate speech and against Internet indecency, or residency requirements intended to staunch the inflow of indigents to states with generous welfare laws, or term limits for Congressmen, or the one-house veto of administrative regulations, or the line-item veto, or requiring prisons and other public bodies to accommodate the practices of religious minorities, or efforts to limit the role of money in political campaigns—all areas where the Supreme Court, in the name of the Constitution, has thrown spanners into the works. The experiments may be wrong, but we will never know if they are snuffed out before the results are known.

Tushnet, reviewing such examples, concludes that "judicial review basically amounts to noise around zero: it offers essentially random changes, sometimes good, sometimes bad, to what the political system produces." This is conjecture. The great value of the work of the skeptics is



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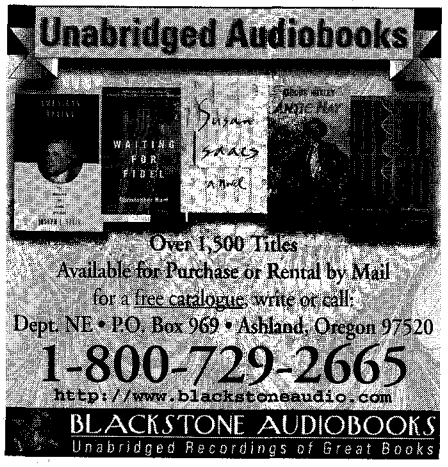

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not that they have "proved" that judicial review is a bad thing on balance, or that their writings will inspire a movement to amend the Constitution to abrogate the power. It is that they have undermined the complacent belief that judicial review is unequivocally a good thing. They have challenged the believers to make a better case; and if the believers fail to do so, the result may be to make the judiciary more sensitive to the dangers to society of throwing its weight around in the name of judicial review; more mindful of Isabel's warning to Angelo in *Measure for Measure* that "it is excellent to have a giant's strength: but it is tyrannous to use it like a giant"; and more hesitant, therefore, to use the power of judicial review to block the policy initiatives of the other branches of American government. ■

Varieties of Protest

By HEIKO A. OBERMAN

Martin Luther: The Christian Between God and Death by Richard Marius

(Harvard University Press, 542 pp., $35)

I.

RICHARD MARIUS published his first book on Martin Luther in 1974. It attracted little notice, which was regrettable not least for the quaint French dedication on the title page, calling attention to the author's proud family tradition of combat against the pernicious Boches: "*Homage à mon père, Henri Toussaint Marius, ancien combattant de l'armée belge grièvement blessé 1940....*" Perhaps not unrelated, this same young Tennessee instructor dared to expose the Catholic scholar Joseph Lortz as a fervent believer in Adolf Hitler and an early member of the Nazi Party, loyal to the Führer until the end.

In 1939, Lortz made a name for himself with his two-volume *The Reformation in Germany*, which was well received even though the essential third volume of documentation never appeared. Lortz was so withering about late medieval Catholicism as to exculpate a Luther who could not have known better. After the war, German Catholics and Protestants alike hailed Lortz enthusiastically, eager to embrace the new ecumenical spirit, so needed in a country impatient with its past and eager to perform the *Wirtschaftswunder*. It is unlikely that Marius was ever allowed to benefit from the fellowships of the Mainzer Institut für europäische Geschichte, which Lortz could found under the protection of France's loose interpretation of the de-Nazification statutes, and with the generous support of his uncompromised coreligionist Konrad Adenauer. In the conspiracy of silence that obtained in all German universities well beyond the student revolution of the 1960s, Marius's exposure of Lortz was doomed to fall on deaf ears. In Germany, Lortz is a celebrated Luther scholar to this very day.

In keeping with such uncalculated frankness, in the preface to his Luther book of 1974 Marius confessed the history of his own disenchantment with his subject. "My background in an intensely Christian home," he began, "taught me to seek comforting words from the religious past to inspire the present." As a matter of fact, his Protestant home inspired him to choose the revival circuit and to enroll in a Baptist seminary. With a vocabulary shaped by soul-seeking sermons, Marius goes on to confess his early high expectations: "So I looked at Luther day after day and night after night, with an almost devout intensity." But Luther could not supply what the Bible itself would soon fail to provide: "I realized slowly and painfully that he had no word to speak to our time."

Not just Luther's religion, but all communing with the Almighty, became suspect when, during the Vietnam War, Marius heard Billy Graham speaking "in great detail to God of Nixon's Christian greatness." Applying the lesson of the 1960s to the sixteenth century, a new secular vision emerged that opened Marius's eyes to the squalor of the past: "Increasingly the Reformation era itself struck me not as an age of gallant heroes, but rather as a brand new generation of vipers, not one of the great stepping-stones of our civilization but rather a trauma like famine or plague that our ancestors barely survived."

Ten years of further reading did not make a difference: in Marius's mind, Luther the viper was firmly established. After giving up a tenured position in Tennessee to accept a new function as Director of Harvard's Expository Writing Program, he published *Thomas More: A Biography* in 1984. This book appeared to mixed reviews, perhaps because his criticism seemed to diminish the status of a saint; though G.R. Elton liked the book, partly owing to Marius's irreverent treatment of More's ruthless intolerance of heretics, and partly owing to his effort to reconstruct "real life"—London, the Court, Parliament—aspects of the historical context so strikingly absent in Marius's two Luther biographies. Since Marius's dissertation at Yale had treated "Thomas More and the Heretics," he had been exposed to More research, and was later enlisted to contribute to two volumes in the Yale edition of More's works. He invoked his affiliation with the Yale edition—"with which the present author has been associated almost since the inception of this enormous project in 1958"—to confirm his standing as a scholar and an interpreter.

IN *THOMAS MORE*, Marius shed his former tone of the Bible-pounding preacher, now transformed into a powerful and pleasing creative English: Marius the writer of fiction was born. (Admittedly, a trace of the pulpit is still present in the uncontrolled loquacity of his new book; a firm editor would have cut the More book by a fourth, the recent Luther book by a third.) In his study of More, moreover, Marius's voice of certitude is so strong, and psychologism is so firmly in place, that More and Luther are kneaded into twins, provided with identical traumas which render the two nearly indistinguishable.

Placing *Thomas More* and *Martin Luther* side by side reveals what may easily escape even critical readers reading either volume in isolation: Marius bridges the gap between "then" and "now," past and present, by transforming the triumvirate used to illuminate each other—Erasmus functions as the standard for mental sanity—into our contemporaries. In his hands, the English saint, the Dutch giant, and the German reformer become "one of us," driven by the same indomitable sexual drives and perplexed by our own fear of

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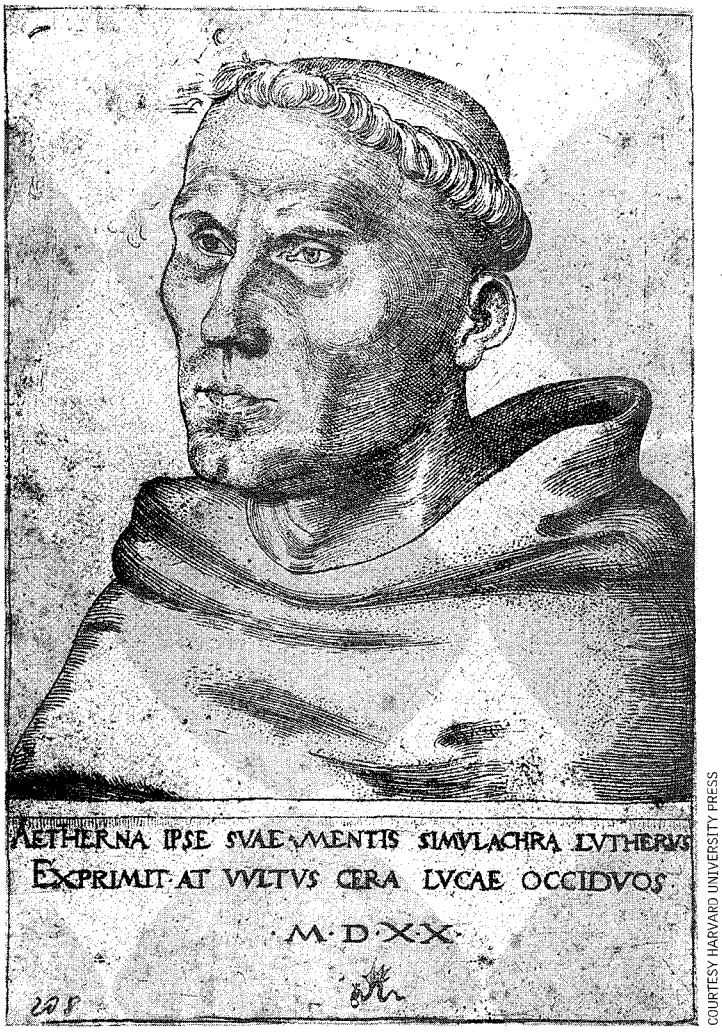
Death as the End, all threatened by a deeply unsettling climate of skepticism, and by the creeping realization that the Bible is merely a waxen nose and the Heavens are no longer the domain of the Almighty.

Since the textual basis for such an interpretation is, to put it mildly, very small, Marius's main interpretive tool is rhetoric, a veritable pulpit-call, expressed in cascades of powerful prose, to follow him on the thorny path from firm believer to enlightened member of the intellectual establishment. Whenever actual statements of More or Luther are quoted and interpreted, a hesitant "perhaps" or a softening "almost" is inserted, more often than not followed by a consideration qualified as "probable," before such wavverings are set aside in crisp one-liners.

All of these pronouncements circle around Marius's great psychological discovery: that More and Luther—more so than Erasmus with his "secular religion"—are victims of the same daunting dawn of doubt that propelled Marius himself from the pulpit to the classroom. In the case of More, his fervent defense of orthodoxy is not depicted as confessional language typical of More's believing age, but as strident "polemics"—and More's campaign against heresy is not understood as the defense of a beleaguered Church, but as born out of an "inner fury," incompatible with the benevolent tolerance of his earlier *Utopia*: "This fury was not a bizarre lapse in an otherwise noble character; it was almost the essence of the man."

The suppression of doubt is typical of obscurantists on both sides of the confessional line. Whereas Marius's two books on Luther target know-nothing Protestants caught in the suffocating quagmire of fundamentalism, his life of More challenges Catholics unable to cope with "the bleak, bloody world portrayed by Charles Darwin," which drove "many yearning and frightened souls into the arms of a venerable tradition that promised certainty and buried doubt in liturgy and general indignation against modernity." For Marius, there are two keys to the protomodern soul of More. There is the fear of death and hell, so powerful that "his life became a prison from which he longed to escape." This fear made him unrelenting in the defense of thoroughly "medieval ideas": "When they were threatened, he could and did descend into deceit, hatred, and murderous rage." Using the academic synonym for "probable," the conclusion is drawn that "it may be argued" that even More's final sacrifice as martyr stems from the inner conflict of an old, pervading mood of doubt: "he died not for what he believed, but for what he wanted to believe."



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Lucas Cranach the Elder, "Martin Luther," 1520

Unfortunately, Marius could not yet profit from Brad Gregory's *Salvation at Stake*, soon to be published by Harvard University Press—a rich and reliable historical study of sixteenth-century martyrdom among steadfast Anabaptists, Lutherans, and Catholics, which explores the alien territory of the past without adjusting it to modern and postmodern perceptions. The modern interpreter of the martyr's baffling willingness to die is bound to hit the brick wall of total incomprehension unless he is willing to respect certain alien modes of seeing the world; but Marius prefers to condescend to them.

Marius's second key to More is his allegedly guilty conscience, which made him into "a melancholy man." All set to embrace the religious life, More turned back "because he wanted a wife." Way ahead of other interpreters, Marius observes that "few have contemplated the deep inner conflict ... the burden of guilt that a man of his own uncompromising temperament felt at bowing to demands of the flesh." More always struggled for assurance that he might escape the judgment of God for his impurity of soul, and was distracted by concern for his own soul with a darkness that always threatened to consume him. "I believe it was the ruling drama of his life," Marius observes.

No shift is necessary for Marius to move from More to Luther. He, too, "was darkly preoccupied with the salvation of his soul and nearly crushed by the burden of his own sins." Moreover, "both More and Luther had intense sexual drives that troubled their piety." All this lust made them into irascible men: "In each of them burned an intensity that was often comic but could become fury at the slightest provocation." And Luther, too, was animated by the fear of death. "His greatest terror," Marius writes in the preface to his new book, "one that came on him periodically as a horror of darkness, was the fear of death." Its psychological companion is not far away: "Luther, who hated skepticism, was a skeptic in spite of himself." And again Marius flatters himself for his own intellectual courage: "Although few scholars seem to have contemplated the idea ... this thesis, I believe, brings Luther closer to us." It sure does!

II.

THE READER OF *Thomas More* will not be surprised to learn that Marius's closer look at Luther unmasks the German Reformer as a horrifying ogre, with his "brilliant mind fired by a furious energy, his warped, narcissistic character cursed by contradictions worthy of the Mephistopheles of Marlowe, with arrogance and despair locked inseparably and fatally together." Such a man, one must admit, was destined to be

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a catastrophe for Western civilization.

In the fifteen years since *Thomas More*, Marius has not been idle. He has diligently read the relevant Luther literature, and extended his primary source base well beyond the meager pickings of his first Luther book. What has not changed one bit, however, is his assessment of the mood of the times. The Reformation was "swept along by one of the great recurring waves of skepticism in human history, [which] doubts that God exists at all and that he can or will raise the dead." Since there is no evidence whatsoever for such a view, this is a breathtaking statement indeed.

Two more statements about Luther complete Marius's picture. "He grounded his claims to certainty on scripture, and even in his own time scripture proved to be a frail reed." And he "raged against those who disagreed with him," and threw up a "furious defense"—upholding views which Marius, through his own study of the Bible, has found to be "tenuous ... on all sides": "Why did he not face the difficulties of scripture squarely and arrive at the irenic balance between faith and skepticism that characterized Erasmus?" Since this is a rhetorical question, it would be unfair to insist that no Erasmus scholar would be able to recognize in this description the Prince of Humanists. Only Erasmus's opponents tried to discredit his views as "skeptical."

Marius uses the remainder of this lengthy book to present proof of his psychological notions about a long-dead human being brought up short for close consideration. Since the theme of fear and fury is sufficiently repetitious, and the thesis of the rising tide of skepticism is consistently brought home as "the intellectual chaos of our time, demanding either honest admission or resulting in catastrophe," we may safely test Marius's interpretation in three areas without running the danger of missing his point. Let us begin with the "unpleasant" question of shit.

THE PLACE IS Gotha, Saxony; the time is May 1, 1515. The scene that Marius wants to interpret is the Chapter-Meeting of Luther's order, the Observant Augustinians. Newly elected as vicar-general, the later Reformer delivers a programmatic sermon on the sin of slander—or, more precisely, on "backbiting," a connotation that only the English language has preserved with its acute sense of things physical. Marius does not want the reader to be left guessing, either about his own front-line research or about the low quality of Luther's discourse. "This unpleasant exercise," he writes, "has not been translated or reprinted so far as I know, and it is seldom mentioned."

Once more he flatters himself. Had Marius consulted the critical edition to which he refers in his endnote, he would have noticed that this sermon has been known ever since Valentin Löscher included it in his *Acts and Documents*, which appeared in Leipzig in 1720; and that it was republished in the first volume of the Erlangen edition of Luther's works in 1865; and that it was again made available in the first volume of the Weimar edition in 1883; and that it was conveniently translated into German by Johannes Georg Walch in his second edition of Luther's works, published in St. Louis in 1880–1910.

For serious Luther scholars, this text is important for a number of reasons. First, it gives us access to the mental world of the Observants, which is why Luther's deft sermon can only be understood with the help of the rich library of Observant rules and tracts made available during the last decade. Second, it highlights the formidable role of the Devil, so strikingly absent in Marius's story. After all, slander is the Devil's preferred field of operation; as a matter of fact, Luther points out, the real meaning of the word "Satan" is backbiter, the shitter on God and man. Third, this sermon enables us to enter a field where even angels fear to tread, and which we try to keep at arm's length by neatly labeling it "scatology." Slander is breaking into the private domain of the "privy," which the Devil, as Luther points out, regards as his own territory.

As a professional backbiter, the Devil is fascinated with shit, attracted by the odorous feces which monks were instructed to deposit in the cloaca, the pits. Luther's subsequent claim, in the Preface to the first edition of his early works (1545), to have discovered the doctrine of justification by faith "on the cloaca" has been an embarrassment to Luther scholars for centuries, but it expresses a powerful theological idea: it refers to a God who does not shy away from the pits of the human condition. In this festive homily Luther's language is not rude, it is rudimentary. His later intensified shit-attack against popes and other enemies of the Reformation, which his admirers like to condone as the forgivable foul language of an old and sick man, was the intended collateral damage of his fight with the Devil himself.

Marius's "unpleasant exercise" reveals more than his inability to deal with a specific historical situation and a complex text not easily reduced to current psychological wisdom. It is evidence of the far more fundamental problem of presentism—the colonial claim on the past as our own territory, but lacking the acute awareness of a perplexing world. The presentist historian invades the past with no respect for its difference, and without awe. At times, Marius seems to be aware of what can be expected from him. In *A Short Guide to Writing About History*, which appeared in 1989, he instructs his undergraduates "to think of themselves as detectives, exploring the evidence of the past to resolve its mysteries, or at least to make plausible suggestions about how the mysteries might be resolved." When these detectives are dispatched with Marius's instructions in hand, they are about as well prepared as, say, CIA agents in Kurdistan, operating without a true knowledge of the language or any sense of the lie of the land, its unique cultural and religious traditions.

OUR SECOND TEST of Marius's competence concerns his assumption that both More and Luther were swayed and ultimately defeated by a pervasive current of skepticism that was shaking the medieval foundations of faith. At about the time when Marius started to distance himself from his religious past, however, the view that the later Middle Ages surrendered to a mood of skepticism was already dated. Until the middle of this century, textbooks still reflected the assumption that, in the wake of the Black Plague, a tired skepticism infiltrated Europe's mentality, undermining its confidence in the scholastic pursuit of a plausible balance between faith and reason. Today, too many newly edited texts from all parts of late medieval Europe are available to sustain this view. On closer consideration, it turns out that the movement sometimes called the *via moderna*, and sometimes referred to as "nominalism," stimulated not skepticism but the new science, and made short shrift with metaphysical speculations about the being of God by recovering the Hebrew emphasis on the personal God of the Covenant.

Marius is unaware of all this. He prefers to invest the old view of a general philosophical skepticism with new vigor by invoking the name of Pietro Pomponazzi, an Italian professor of philosophy in Padua, Ferrara, and Bologna in the early sixteenth century. Well before Pomponazzi's treatise on *The Immortality of the Soul* (1516), his suggestion was circulated in academic circles that—"leaving aside revelation and miracles"—reason alone could not but conclude that the human soul is mortal, and the demise of the soul coincides with the death of the body. The rather unproductive Fifth Lateran Council responded in 1513 by confirming the centuries-old medieval doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and implicitly condemned the views of Pomponazzi by

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insisting that this dogma is supported by both faith and reason.

Pomponazzi's thoughts about the mortality of the soul remained marginal to the mainstream of European thought, and they provide no more than a red herring for the Luther story; but herring is a delicacy not to be disdained. The Italian—without a command of Greek, a severely handicapped philosopher—was certainly an intriguing dissident. For Marius, however, he looms larger: his condemnation is a major event, and not just the isolated rejection of a particular philosophical opinion. For Marius, Pomponazzi represents a measure of the general climate of the times.

In Marius's book on More, the suggestion is even ventured that Pomponazzi's was "a cry of naturalism against the prevailing supernaturalism of his day, a supernaturalism that Thomas More upheld all his life and died to vindicate." This allows Marius to pursue his favorite idea that More, "preoccupied with death throughout his life, could not stomach such a reversal of the way Catholics had regarded the soul for centuries." And in his new book on Luther, it is again the Italian philosopher who is trotted out to explain Luther's "preoccupation" with the mortality of his soul: "his meditations on death are frequent and profoundly weighted with melancholy and foreboding." We are even treated to a break in Luther's development, since "the early Luther taught the same serenity towards death that he rejects so emphatically in later years.... He was afflicted with an acute and extreme fear of death ... the final destiny of the body and the soul, without the miraculous intervention of God."

Again, some corrections are in order. First, the isolated treatment of Luther without context, which was typical of traditional Luther scholarship for centuries, has made Marius overlook the rich late medieval tradition of the *Ars Moriendi*, the sophisticated art of dying well. A particularly popular specimen, written by the influential Johannes Gerson (who died in 1429), was typeset in the cellar of Luther's own monastery in Wittenberg in 1513. The spiritual strategy of this genre is to display death in all its horror, while at the same time articulating God's "miraculous" but reliable intervention. Thus the young Luther and the old Luther may not be mutually exclusive at all. They may well testify to the two sides of the intended spiritual balance between fear and hope.

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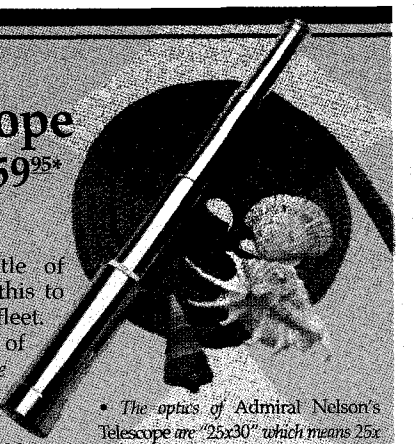

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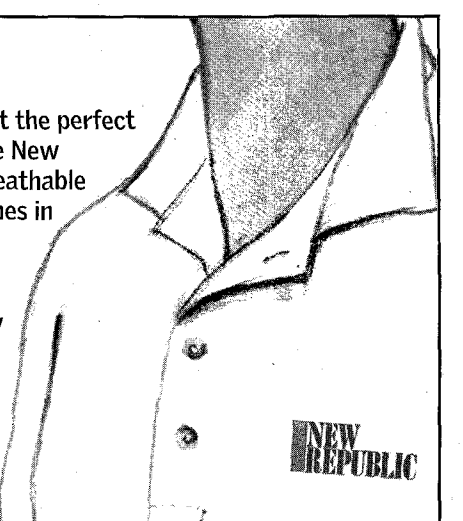

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developments in German scholarship. And it has escaped Marius's attention that Gerhard Ebeling dedicated some 1,500 pages in three substantial volumes (published between 1977 and 1989) to Luther's treatment of the immortality of the soul, as well as to his multifaceted meditation about death. And from Ebeling's work it is impossible not to conclude that, whereas Luther does indeed mention the Fifth Lateran Council once—approvingly—and is aware of the kind of Aristotelian interpretation that Pomponazzi represents, there is no evidence of any exceptional personal anguish.

Ebeling's findings are especially striking in view of the fact that the notion of purgatory, failing the test of Scripture, was no longer a specific location but a condition of life. For the first generation of Europeans without hell, Luther himself included, the last stretch of the road must have been heavily overcast by the shadows of death. For purgatory as an alternative to hell had so long provided the only glowing spark of hope. There must have been inner struggle; but without textual sources to measure these mysteries of inner struggle, to say any more would be to abandon history for historical fiction.

If Marius had been really interested in ascertaining the psychological roots of his own tradition, he should have turned to the leader of the second generation of Protestants, John Calvin, who was much more central in the formation of that puritan tradition that Marius wanted to escape. Calvin was the one who dared to reinterpret the darkest clause in the second article of the Apostolic Creed, "He descended into hell," to refer to the extreme anguish of Jesus on the cross, thus dislocating purgatory and hell in one stroke. It was Calvin, not Luther, who opened the door to a valid psychological approach to the problem of salvation, because this is the path that the Genevan reformer chose to follow himself.

The folly of presentism notwithstanding, the sixteenth-century debate about the immortality of the soul touches upon a theme of extreme relevance for our own time. Behind the militant alliance between Catholics and Protestants who oppose abortion there lurks the dogma of the Fifth Lateran Council, the belief in the immortality of each human soul. The Reformers failed to take issue with this doctrine. Luther doubted its philosophical underpinnings, and took a position not unlike Pomponazzi in regarding Aristotle as a spokesman for the mortality of the soul; but Luther never doubted that the immortality of the soul was a fundamental article of Christian faith. For Calvin, both philosophy and theology support this doctrine, and in the very first treatise written after his conversion in 1534, Calvin pointed to the complete accord between Plato and Paul in placing the immortality of the soul beyond all discussion.

But twentieth-century biblical scholarship, from Gerard van der Leeuw in 1935 to Oscar Cullmann in 1955, made a major and generally unnoticed breakthrough in our understanding of this matter. By insisting on the Hebrew Bible as the genuine matrix of early Christian thought, the doctrine of immortality has been shown to be a relatively late pagan import into Christianity. Biblically seen, immortality is the prerogative of God alone, granted to believers as an undeserved gift. Thus the resurrection of the flesh is not the complement of immortality, but its radical negation. To use an expression of Marius, it is the yield of God's miraculous intervention. The silence surrounding these new findings is not surprising. It must be hard to swallow, when long-treasured Christian convictions are exposed as pagan aberrations.

III.

THE THIRD TEST of Marius's interpretation of Luther carries us to one of the darkest currents in Luther's thought: his fervent anti-Semitism, exemplified in his call for the burning of the synagogues. In his brief, and remarkably subdued, chapter "On the Jews," Marius continues his search for proof of Luther's catastrophic impact on Western civilization. He begins in America, by looking at American grass-roots religion. He notes that many Christian fundamentalists in the United States today are "at once ardently Zionist and harshly anti-Semitic. They love the Jews for what they will be but hate them for what they are." Since St. Paul expected the Jews to be converted before the return of Christ, the "stubborn Jews" are obstacles on the path toward the fulfillment of time, the coming of the New Heaven and the New Earth.

For once, Marius's preoccupation with his own time provides access to the sixteenth century. After all, a central mark of the tradition of Christian belief is its fervent expectation of the end, with all its potentially anti-Semitic fallout. At this point, however, Marius repairs to the traditional apologetics about Luther's hatred of the Jews. First, we are left with the impression that Luther might have changed his mind had he met some real Jews; but alas, "the Jews remained a people whom Luther did not know face to face." This extenuation can be as easily refuted as that other canard, that the young Luther expected all Jews to be converted to the evangelical cause, and when the stubborn Jews did not live up to this expectation, the old man turned against them out of an understandable sense of disappointment. Marius lends this popular face-saving device one more turn of the psychological screw. "The hopes for the Jews expressed in *That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew* [1523]," he writes, "perhaps represented consciously or unconsciously his hopes for his own vindication in a world that was rejecting his gospel and assaulting his character." There it is again, the diplomatic use of "perhaps"; and also the smooth transition from the documentable conscious realm to the undocumentable realm of the unconscious, one of the major traits of historical fiction.

UNFORTUNATELY FOR MARIUS, the elementary condition for dealing with Luther is a full command of the language tools, neo-Latin and in this case early modern German. In the crucial passage invoked by Marius, Luther does not express hope for a mass conversion. He says only that "some Jews" will be converted. In 1523, the young Luther held up a mirror to the medieval Church, arguing that its distortion of the Gospel made it near-impossible for Jews to discover Christ the Messiah. Since "today" the Gospel has been restored, "*etliche*" among the Jews—"several" or "some," not "all"—may find their way to the baptismal font. There is no solace to be had from an open-minded and tolerant young Luther. The early Luther *and* the late Luther regarded the Jews as the "enemies of God." In keeping with the entire medieval tradition, he was convinced that they broke the Old Covenant with Abraham, "today" replaced by the New Covenant in Christ—and only "some" are to escape God's wrath.

Marius reserves his full fury for the old man's "virulent ravings against the Jews," and artfully inserts his favorite thesis about Luther's fear of death into the discussion. The "outrageous attack in *On the Jews and Their Lies* [1543]," he writes, "represents one of those rhetorical horrors that may be explained in the various ways that we explain the cruelties that human beings inflict on others when the tormentors feel their own place in the universe threatened with annihilation." In the end, Marius's analysis of Luther's view of the Jews consists in little more than a vague moralism. "[T]hat Luther's hostility to the Jews was not the same as modern anti-Semitism does not excuse it. It was as bad as Luther could make it, and that was bad enough to leave a legacy that had hateful consequences for centuries."

This is as unimpeachable as it is banal. Familiarity with the present state of research could have provided Marius with

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the historical setting that gives depth to Luther's role in this ugly history. Just as his treatise of 1523 intended to fend off Catholic criticism (as Marius notices, Luther responded to the accusation of denying the Virgin Birth of Jesus), so his strident call in 1543 for harsh treatment of the Jews was the reaction to a charge of heresy, in this case that all Lutherans were in cahoots with the Jews. To make this point, Luther's arch-enemy Johannes Eck had published a manifesto called *Against the Defense of Jews* in 1541, invoking as proof a recent case of Jewish ritual murder that the Lutheran preacher Osiander had denied. Eck urged the authorities to desist from their policy of toleration and to introduce forced labor for the Jews—the very demand that was reiterated by Luther two years later. Luther's defensive message was clear: we are not in collusion with the Jews. We are not *Judenfreunden*. He certainly made his point.

A truly hard-hitting criticism of Luther must rest on more than speculations about his unconscious life. Luther must be arraigned before the tribunal of his own convictions—namely, his radical rethinking of justification by faith alone. For that doctrine denotes the certainty of salvation of all believers, since not even the gravest sin can thwart the promise of God's grace. This very idea should have spelled for Luther the end of the traditional foundation of all Christian anti-Semitism, the confident assertion that it was Jewish disobedience that caused the end of the first covenant and the beginning of the second covenant, the Covenant with the New Israel, the Church of Christ. When the renowned critic of all past unbiblical accretions failed to extract himself from the anti-Semitic tradition of the Middle Ages, he lent it a new and ominous authority for the future.

BAD BOOKS ARE written all the time. For this reason, the international guild of scholars carries the special responsibility to alert and protect the non-specialized, and to that extent vulnerable, readership. Yet Marius's tendentious and ignorant book slipped through a number of safeguards that we have come to treasure in a time of increased production and decreased dissemination of knowledge.

Marius's book was not only published by a reputable university press, it was also selected by the History Book Club. Whereas a university press can be expected to be responsible for quality control, it should be noted that the History Book Club has become a subsidiary of the Book of the Month Club. Today this club is a commercial undertaking, no longer under academic direction; and yet it purports to provide the general public with what looks like a certified education in history. Surely it is time that professional historians look beyond their students in the classroom and assume some responsibility for what is presented to the general public, in books and in films, as the past.

Marius's book is what the Romans called a *pia fraus*, a "pious fraud." After all, its motivation is openly admitted: the intense fervor of the lapsed believer who is intent on rejecting his past. Just as the televangelist inserts Greek and Hebrew terms to lend wings to his desperate message, so we find here all the trappings of high scholarship, purporting to show that the sources have been consulted and the secondary literature has been considered. The old pulpit rhetoric continues to shine through, but it has now reached a higher and richer pitch in the eloquent indictment of More and Luther, both reduced to the same crass psychological causality.

The homiletical Marius grandly assigns himself a place among a venerable cloud of witnesses: "My estimation of Luther's Reformation is much akin to Simon Schama's of the French Revolution or Richard Pipes's of the Bolshevik Revolution. They believe that these great upheavals were disasters for the peoples involved, and I believe that Luther represents a catastrophe in the history of Western civilization." There is nothing wrong with such a hypothesis. Good scholarship can be born from disdain as well as from respect. Yet it must be the result of an open-minded search for truth, and not the satisfaction of closed and unshakable convictions. A good historian needs more than righteous anger. ■

CORRESPONDENCE

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what seems important but is shown to be superficial, foolish, and simpleminded—reminds us of William Gaddis's recent death ("Making It," July 5). Gaddis's *The Recognitions* proposed that, after ages of faith and reason, we now live in an age of publicity. His portrayals of New York culture remain true today, 44 years later. As cruel as his satire was, however, Gaddis also seriously wrestled with issues of faith and thought, and, above all, art and love, to make the work satisfying and ennobling—a far cry from the cynical pose Andersen and his like hide behind. Bravo for Siegel's incisive review.

ERIC ROSENBLOOM
Brooklyn, New York

TO THE EDITORS:
Lee Siegel's review was a welcome blast of reality amid all the mindless hype about a big novel with almost nothing to say. I think Siegel went over the top in calling Andersen a "very social sociopath," but I agree that he is a narcissistic money-grubber in an age of narcissistic money-grubbers. I applaud TNR for not getting swept up in the stampede of New York media lemmings on the subject of Andersen's soon-to-be-forgotten novel.

LAURA K. LLOYD
Kansas City, Missouri

Bettor behavior

TO THE EDITORS:
The National Opinion Research Center (NORC) did not carry out an "anti-gambling study," as TNR styled it, for the National Gambling Impact Study Commission ("Gaming the System," July 12). NORC, a nonpartisan social science group based at the University of Chicago, has no ax to grind for any of the combatants in the gambling wars. The main thing we did for the commission was interview about 3,000 randomly selected adults at home and at casinos or tracks, as well as lottery retailers. Based on the survey data on gambling attitudes, expenditures, and consequences, we projected statistically that, of 200 million U.S. adults age 18 or older, 29 million never gamble and 148 million gamble without any signs of trouble, but 5.5 million report clear signs of trouble, nearly half of them serious enough to earn the psychiatric diagnosis of "pathological gambler"; about 15 million adults are in-between, an "at-risk" group.

Oddly, some of the interested parties began hyperventilating about not the 177 million we deemed fine or the 5.5 million we deemed not fine but the 15 million about whom it's hard to be sure yet exactly what, if anything, is going on in their betting lives.

Readers are welcome to browse through all of our work for the gambling commission at *www.norc.uchicago.edu/new/gambling.htm*.

DEAN R. GERSTEIN
Washington, D.C.

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Please address letters to: Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036 (letters may also be sent electronically to: tnr@aol.com). All letters should include the writer's full name, address, and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be held to under 200 words. Letters may be edited for space. Please do not send letters via fax.

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LONDON DIARIST

Entitled

THE NEWS, GATHERED—OR suffered—during a recent visit to London, that Prince Edward and his new wife would henceforth be called the Earl and Countess of Wessex, was laughter-inducing. The title "Earl of Wessex" has been dormant since the death of King Harold in 1066. It is comically antique. It is not so much prehistoric as savage, or primal. One half expects the new couple to paint themselves with woad and dance in bearskins at Stonehenge. That Wessex is best known as the name of Thomas Hardy's fictional re-creation of Dorset seems appropriate justice for the largely fictional Edward: he can name his children Tess and Jude, and make sure that they are rejected by Oxford.

BUT THIS LAUGHTER WAS HOLLOW, because it was quickly followed by the much more ridiculous information that Prince Edward was prompted to his choice by watching the film *Shakespeare in Love*, whose Gwyneth Paltrow-abusing villain is called the Earl of Wessex. A "source close to the prince," reported one paper, "says it was the Wessex title—not the wholly invented character portrayed in the film—that impressed him." Jumpers! Travesties! This is disillusioning on several fronts. For one thing, the literary slide from earnest Hardy to shallow Stoppard is rather steep. For another, the prospect of members of the royal family sitting around plucking noble titles from films as if they were particularly fat clusters of popcorn feels like a contemporary version of those ancien régime excesses that rightly stirred revolution. Let us be thankful that Edward was not watching, say, *Notting Hill* when the mood of acquisition took him, or he might have chosen Napoleon of Notting Hill.

ALL THIS, YOU WOULD THINK, WOULD make a republican out of even a lady-in-waiting. But I still find myself unwilling to cry "off with their heads," and the recent talk of John F. Kennedy Jr. as "America's prince" confirms my uneasy monarchism. There are no very decent arguments for retaining the British royal family as such, but there do seem to be reasonable arguments for retaining, in its very broadest sense, the aristocratic principle and hence, alas, the British royal family. (I say this not as a dyed-in-the-silk aristocrat but as a dyed-in-the-wool bourgeois.) Or put it this way: the arguments for abolishing the monarchy are more dangerous than the arguments against it.

THOSE WHO WOULD LIKE THE government to legislate the royal family out of existence want, presumably, to destroy an inequitable system that is partly maintained by the aristocratic principle and on top of whose pyramidal structure sits the Queen, the most visible emblem of that principle. Such people are generally not Marxists, or even socialists: they want to force Britain out of aristocracy and into meritocracy, not into communism or the forcible redistribution of wealth. There are two questions, then. Is this an efficient or desirable means of bringing about that more equitable society? And should we all desire a more equitable society—or, since we all desire a *more* equitable society, the question is always *how* equitable? (America's anti-monarchical response would seem to be not too equitable, thank you.)

THE ANSWER TO THE FIRST QUESTION is obviously no. It is clear that a dynamic bourgeoisie, and not the slaughter of the aristos, transformed society out of its antiquarian feudalism; and Britain is a good example of this truth. Perhaps the relaxation or curtailment of aspects of feudalism freed that bourgeoisie in the past, but it is not clear that any shackles remain today. To force the royal family to give up its castles and paintings and retire to a small Elizabethan manor house, clutching a Rubens or two, obviously changes nothing, unless one is willing similarly to reduce the circumstances of the landowning gentry and all the minor people underneath this top layer who support the status quo. No one has suggested that. But then, since the royal family heads a principle, that principle would survive their ouster, and the abolished royals would simply become an alternative center of power, fawned over in *Hello!* by all those dismal European aristo-watchers who made Diana an "icon." The country would retain all that is most disagreeable about royalty (or aristocracy) without any of the current benefits.

FURTHER, FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO dispossess the royal family would mean a governmental appropriation of its property and goods, which would be a disturbingly revolutionary gesture—and incoherent anyway, for, as I said, an attack on royalty must be an attack on the principle that sustains it, and must mean the forcible possession of other grand houses and estates. If it is the whole class of scroungers you want, then take all their houses. It is the only way.

SINCE MOST OF US WOULD RESIST that depth of revolutionary impulse, it would appear that we don't want society to be too equitable; we don't want a forcible leveling, but a free mobility. This is meritocratic and reasonable, and compatible with an aristocratic principle, because aristocracy and meritocracy are not opposites, but cousins. Aristocracy, of course, is merely the older, decayed, rigid relation of meritocracy; meritocracy is aristocracy in the busy, dynamic process of founding itself. Many of the private fortunes and estates amassed by English and Scottish noblemen were secured by earlier versions of contemporary capitalism (monopoly, competition, theft, inheritance, warfare); most of these people were soft by comparison with J.P. Morgan.

MERITOCRACY BECOMES A PROBLEM of aristocracy as soon as wealth becomes inheritance. Anti-monarchists are great haters of the idea of inheritance, but such hatred is illogical; in fact, it is strictly impossible, like hating time itself. Of course some will inherit more than others, and of course all family beneficiaries are undeserving, because you cannot deserve what you did not earn. (You don't deserve your parents.) The only plausible amelioration of this inequity—and what is best in American society suggests this—is to create a system mobile enough that the unfortunate can create their own inheritances.

OF COURSE, LINEAGE IS IDIOTIC, BUT not so meaningless that one should just sweep it away. It is foolish, perhaps, that we admire a tree simply for having stood for 500 years. But longevity awes us simply by being itself, which is why we can admire ugly old things just for being old. This is the advantage that aristocratic heroes have over meritocratic heroes. Meritocratic heroes, being such, are supposed to earn their status. But most fail to do so and thus are converted by their worshipers into aristocratic heroes—as with the Kennedys and their "prince." Aristocratic heroes, by contrast, do not have to earn their status, because they are simply the agents of a principle, which is their own longevity. Thus, they don't even have to *be* heroes. Which brings me back to the decidedly unheroic, rather ugly, but certainly old British royal family. I am, alas, imprisoned by my own theory; I am stuck with the Earl of Wessex.

JAMES WOOD

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COMMENTARY THAT HITS

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LOOK AT THE WORLD
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AND THEY WILL SAY
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